

# Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity Network Sector Workshops and Outreach Sessions

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*Non - Government Sector Workshop Summary*

Submitted by:



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## Introduction

The Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity Network (ESBN) is a multidisciplinary group of experts working to build the knowledge required to assist with the implementation of an Ecosystem Services (ES) approach in Alberta. ES are the benefits that humans receive from nature including provisioning (e.g. food, fuel, fibre, fresh water), regulating (e.g. air quality, climate regulation, erosion control, water quality), cultural (e.g. spiritual enrichment, recreation, aesthetic experiences) and supporting services (e.g. production of oxygen, soil formation).

Over the past several years many organizations, various levels of government, academia and industry have been exploring ways to integrate ES into planning and decision-making on working landscapes in Alberta. An important element of this approach is to identify current and future information needs. To meet these needs, solutions need to be developed that are practical, science-based, easy to understand and communicate.

In response, the ESBN developed a series of sector-based workshops to support the development of a recognized, comprehensive ES approach that can be adopted by governments, resource-based industries, landowners and land managers, and conservation organizations. The Non – Government Sector workshop brought together approximately 25 individuals from a cross-section of the environmental organizations working across Alberta.

## Principles for Sector Participant Engagement

The proposed program and process for participant engagement is based on the following principles:

1. Use sector focused workshops to ensure use of common language, understanding, knowledge, experience, regulatory frameworks and consistent approaches.
2. The involvement process will be designed to respect the requirements to address the project outcomes as well as to meet the needs of the participants in sharing their informed perspectives.
3. Participants will be provided the opportunity to be meaningfully engaged, increase and share their knowledge and feel that the event has been valuable to their learning.
4. The use of the results from the workshops will be clearly explained to participants.

The aim of the workshop was to bring together agriculture leaders to discuss and review the following core elements of the ESBN Roadmap:

1. Focus on five ESBN Roadmap building blocks.
2. Reference ecosystem attributes (Provisioning; Regulating; Cultural and Supporting Services).
3. Review and provide feedback on proposed approaches that have been developed to date.
4. Identify gaps, additional needs and opportunities to advance implementation of ecosystem services in support of regional land use plans.

## Workshop Desired Outcomes

The workshop series was designed to help address the following outcomes:

1. Increase the awareness of the Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity Network, the work sponsored to date and identification of areas for future research and collaboration.
2. Enhance the awareness and understanding of past and current landscape and watershed planning efforts and develop a clearer understanding of opportunities for collaboration on public and private land conservation initiatives.

3. Identify partners who can assist with the development of an expanded suite of ES tools.
4. Enhance the understanding of existing landscape planning and implementation programs currently delivered for the conservation and restoration of natural assets in targeted landscapes of Alberta.
5. Enhance the understanding of an integrated and operational ES market and the identification of gaps along with additional information and research needs.

## Workshop Participant Discussion Summary

### Assessment – Opportunities

- Look closer at the value of ES with research
- Refine existing models for regional variability
- Include the benefits of native prairie and incentives to retain
- Models need to communicate with each other
- Identify range of values of ES linked to green infrastructure

### Assessment – Gaps

- Model or tool needs to be scalable
  - Ability to adapt models across province
  - Increase the flexibility without most accurate data (good enough)
- Use assessment to target landscape areas and most appropriate tools
- Need a model to be applied at smaller scale
  - Populations don't understand what is already occurring
- Lack of awareness of wetland policy
- Are recreational impacts being considered in recreational model?

### Assessment – Recommendations

- Build business case
- Simplify the biodiversity intactness model
  - Outputs/communications
- Work with GoA to develop thresholds
- Explore/integrate other data (qualitative data)
  - Riparian health assessments
  - Western Sky landowner
  - WaterSmart.

### Assessment – Risks/Barriers

- Proprietary data issue
- Need to identify sources (urban, rural recreational)
- Non-point sources versus point sources
- Assumption that interest/demand for ES and voluntary markets
- Lack of incentives for participation

## Data and Information Management – Opportunities

- Develop report cards for municipalities and watersheds
- Partner with WPACs to share data
- Upload data based on permissions
- Trend analysis and integrate into planning
- Scale/reporting needs to be consistent and comparable

## Data and Information Management – Gaps

- Acreages, lake properties
  - How do we link to and/or incorporate into data?
- Financial and political durability of the system
  - Building and maintaining the system
- How accurate is enough/required?
  - Ensure scale is applied to need
  - Therefore verification is not required for all scales
- Reliable, equal and relevant, effective ES assessment of property
  - By qualified organization(s)
- Timelines of data (not annually available)
- Not using all data currently being collected

## Data and Information Management – Recommendations

- Transferability of data as available
- Have data stewards review data
- Outcomes need to be valuable (i.e. report cards)
  - And applied
- Develop data standards and publicize
  - Data/information accessibility
  - Relevant data and application
- Field assessment tools and verification when market exists
- How to track ES transactions tied to specific land sales etc?

## Data and Information Management – Risks and Barriers

- Affordability of data collection if we keep asking for more data
- Risk of not doing anything
  - Paralyses by inaction
- Suitable funding model
- Waiting for perfect data allows for political incentives
- What is the risk of not doing anything?
  - Cost: effective analysis

## Market Infrastructure and Enabling Policy – Opportunities

- Work with stakeholders (i.e. value of policy towards objective)
- Create policy as backstop to enable market
- Less is more; don't over-complicate, ensures market will use it first
- Build on what has already been done
- Systems are comparable

- Recognize MBI's already in place
- Food production is an ES therefore need to protect Ag Lands from development

### **Market Infrastructure and Enabling Policy – Gaps**

- Government agencies are not talking to each other
- Champions are lacking determine market systems that determine price
- How market captures intrinsic values and/or should it?
- How policy captures intrinsic values and/or should it?

### **Market Infrastructure and Enabling Policy – Recommendations**

- Engage ag agencies (agri-trend, farmer's edge tec.)
- Most desired outcomes are linked to highest values
- Market units linked to values not \$ units
- Develop tool kit for implementation groups
- ID current roadblock policies
- Reward early adopters
- Need to be able to separate and bundle and include quality assessment

### **Market Infrastructure and Enabling Policy – Risks and Barriers**

- Voluntary actions could be discouraged
- Government policy shouldn't set price
- Lack of capacity at municipal level
- Incentive needs to be greater than cost of implementation
- Benefits clearly communicated to the public

### **Engagement and Outreach – Opportunities**

- Look to where opportunities already exist - AAMDC, ASB, WAPC Summit
- Champion group; ARECA, Land Trusts (Ag CE's)
- Public education campaign
- Marketing ED campaign for public should focus on specific assets
- Link to corporate CSR and reporting to and throughout the industry reports
- Using a 3<sup>rd</sup> party to champion the approach

### **Engagement and Outreach – Gaps**

- Simplify the website
- Communication and social media presence need to be stronger
- Utilize webinars
- Lack of common language
- Lack in capacity to implement
- Lack in collaboration in ES updates

### **Engagement and Outreach – Recommendations**

- Common language/vocabulary
  - Website
- Build on other programs
  - Inventory of current programs

- Citizen Science as a tool
- More conversation about moving forward
- ID outcomes and actions items from workshops and meetings
- Factsheets related to modeling
- Prove/provide business case for industry involvement
- Working with professional organizations (bio's, Ag's etc)

### **Engagement and Outreach – Risks and Barriers**

- Better indigenous consultations
- Better engage groups who are against landowners who are receiving financial benefits
- Maintain contact with groups
  - Succession planning
- Appeals to western approach only
- Top-down approach, need to focus on grass-root approach

## Appendix A – Evaluation Summary

### Workshop Objectives

1. I was able to identify gaps that may affect implementation of an ecosystem services approach to land and resource management
  - Strongly agree = 1
  - Agree = 10
  - Neutral = 1
  - Disagree =
  - Strongly Disagree =
2. I was able to identify additional needs to advance implementation of ecosystem services
  - Strongly agree = 3
  - Agree = 7
  - Neutral = 2
  - Disagree =
  - Strongly Disagree =
3. I had an opportunity to increase my awareness of the elements to implement Alberta’s ecosystem services approach
  - Strongly agree = 4
  - Agree = 5
  - Neutral = 2
  - Disagree = 1
  - Strongly Disagree =
4. I was able to learn about the 4 elements to implement Alberta’s ecosystem services
  - Strongly agree = 2
  - Agree = 8
  - Neutral = 1
  - Disagree =
  - Strongly Disagree =
5. Opportunities to continue to build on success to enable the elements to implement Alberta’s ecosystem services were identified
  - Strongly agree = 2
  - Agree = 6
  - Neutral = 4
  - Disagree =
  - Strongly Disagree =
6. Gaps that may affect support for delivering on the elements to implement Alberta’s ecosystem services were identified
  - Strongly agree = 2
  - Agree = 6
  - Neutral = 4
  - Disagree =
  - Strongly Disagree =
7. Realistic barriers to enabling the implementation of the elements to implement Alberta’s ecosystem services were provided
  - Strongly agree = 1
  - Agree = 9



- Neutral = 2  
 Disagree =  
 Strongly Disagree =
8. The Agenda accurately reflected the workshop process  
 Strongly agree = 2  
 Agree = 8  
 Neutral = 1  
 Disagree = 1  
 Strongly Disagree =
9. The instructions during the workshop were clear  
 Strongly agree = 3  
 Agree = 7  
 Neutral = 1  
 Disagree = 1  
 Strongly Disagree =
10. I had an opportunity to participate and contribute my ideas  
 Strongly agree = 4  
 Agree = 6  
 Neutral = 2  
 Disagree =  
 Strongly Disagree =
11. Overall, the workshop met my expectations  
 Strongly agree = 2  
 Agree = 6  
 Neutral = 4  
 Disagree =  
 Strongly Disagree =
12. Additional Comments and Feedback
- Need to start moving forward and start the evaluation process
  - Would have liked to have more thorough introduction of ESBNs goals and objectives and a description of the terminology
  - More information and detail on ESBN models would have been useful to give participant better background before addressing gaps and needs
  - Not able to find appropriate background information
  - Better organization and facilitation would have been helpful. Could have used more information on the assessments and actual ES being proposed. Park side discussions derailed the discussion
  - Information on ES building blocks is very disjointed
  - Additional background information would have been beneficial
  - More aggressive facilitation would stop folks from getting off track in group discussion
  - More participants would have been valuable
  - Participants needed more background info and details to inform discussion
  - If we are going to help engage we need a package of useful materials to share
  - Visuals would have been helpful in supporting discussion (I'm guessing their absence was due to technical difficulties)
  - Overall great format for discussion. To re-emphasize, the ESBN needs to recognize that they must keep their objective simple and clear. Please do not offer more than it can realistically deliver