ASB
news and views
SPRING 2024

On Farm Climate Action Fund - back for 2024!

OFCAF provides financial support to producers to accelerate their adoption and implementation of on-farm Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs) to lower Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, support production efficiency, sustainability and resiliency on their farm operations.
RDAR is a program delivery partner that will administer OFCAF in Alberta through three activity categories:

- Improving Nitrogen Management
- Increasing Adoption of Covering Cropping
- Expanding the Adoption of Rotational Grazing

Learn more about the program, eligibility and applications at: rdar.ca/funding-opportunities/ofcaf
Application intake opened March 1 and will be open until finding limits are reached.

The Canadian Forage and Grassland Association (CFGA) has funding for implementation of short duration rotational grazing and pasture seeding improvements. Learn more about rotational grazing, the application process and more at canadianfga.ca/en/projects/ofcaf-funding

First round of application intake was from March 8 – March 15 and the second round is April 1 – 30.

Canada Organic Trade Association (COTA) and EcoCert Canada have presented a specific project to help organic farmers adopt and implement BMPs. Read the program details, requirements and application information at canada-organic.ca/en/what-we-do/market-access/farm-climate-action-fund

Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership

To support continued innovation, growth and prosperity, the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (S-CAP) supports farmers and ranchers with the following cost-shared grant programs:

- Efficient Grain Handling
- Farm Technology
- Resilient Agricultural Landscape
- Water

Program details can be found at alberta.ca/sustainable-cap. Most of the programs require a current Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) that has been approved within the last ten years.

Funding highlights

- The **Efficient Grain Handling Program** (EGHP) funds grain handling equipment that shows a significant energy efficiency improvement over standard practice. Program expected to resume in April 2024.
- The **Farm Technology Program** supports the adoption of innovative technology that minimizes agricultural waste, optimizes farm efficiency, or improves the security of farming operations. Program expected to resume in April 2024.
- The **Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program** (RALP) provides funding for select BMP projects on a per-acre payment basis for a term of three years under four different categories:
  - pasture management
  - cropland conversion
  - tree establishment
  - wetlands
- The **Water Program** supports new water developments and special incentives under the On-Farm Water Supply Stream
  - Applicants must speak to an Agriculture and Irrigation Water Specialist and receive an approved construction sheet prior to planning and construction of dugouts, dams and spring developments.

LEDUC COUNTY

Local Impact, Global Solutions

The ALUS program was built by farmers and is a model that can grow and easily fit into local community needs. ALUS supports farmers and ranchers to increase or enhance natural areas on their farms which provide solutions to local environmental challenges.

The ALUS program shares project establishment costs and provides annual acre payments for ongoing project stewardship. The program is voluntary and projects are farmer driven.

Since the ALUS Wetaskiwin-Leduc program began in 2016, ALUS has contributed nearly $415,000 to support local program delivery. At the end of 2023, ALUS Wetaskiwin-Leduc had 45 participants with 1243 acres enrolled. Projects in our community have local impact and provide solutions to global concerns. ALUS projects can help improve water quality, mitigate flood and drought, protect from biodiversity loss and help offset various effects of a variable climate.

If you want to learn more about how the ALUS Wetaskiwin-Leduc program might work for your farm, contact the Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator.

Phone: 780-387-6182

Email: kbarkwell@county10.ca

Website: alus.ca/alus_community/alus-wetaskiwin-leduc

1 OFF-STREAM WATERERS pump water from a waterbody and carry it to a trough some distance away. They provide cleaner water for livestock and downstream users.

2 RIPARIAN FENCES keep livestock away from waterbodies. They also filter excess sediment and nutrients, slows water run- off and prevents bank erosion and soil compaction.

3 GRASS BUFFERS are areas of seeded permanent cover that helps trap and filter excess sediment and nutrients, as well as slow water runoff.

Above are examples of agricultural-based infrastructure used by ALUS.

Drought

Impacts of drought are far reaching, and everyone can help do their part. The risk of drought and water shortages are present throughout the province and effects include:

- Economic loss in agriculture and associated industries
- Water restrictions
- Stress or death of vegetation, fish, and wildlife
- Increased forest fire risk

Visit **alberta.ca/drought** to explore a thorough overview of the provincial risk response, current condition, what the government is doing, how you can help and more.

Agriculture is an important economic driver throughout the region. Learn more about farming in dry conditions at **alberta.ca/farming-in-dry-conditions** and other topics ranging from planning and preparation, insurance, stress management, programs and services, wildfires and more.

Alberta Agriculture and Irrigation fact sheet "Drought-proofing Farm Water Supplies" is one of many resources accessed from the above links and provides an outline for planning. A good understanding of water requirements and source options is a key first step!

The Ag-Info Centre can also help direct and connect you to the resources listed.

Phone: 310-FARM (3276)

Email: 310farm@gov.ab.ca

Water Stewardship

With contributions from D. Liddle, Vice-Chair, ALUS Wetaskiwin-Leduc Partnership Advisory Committee

Using water in a way that is socially equitable, environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial sums up water stewardship.

Water is critical and Alberta is at risk of drought and water shortages. We are all connected and can help do our part when it comes to the water we share. There is a need to conserve water as well as protect the quality of water in our watershed. Land managers have an important role to play in the community in that their management practices have an impact on water 'beyond their fence line.'

Once considered waste lands, it is now understood that wetlands provide important benefits, such as mitigating floods and droughts by storing and slowing the release of water. They also filter water, sequester carbon, and provide habitat for wildlife.

Wetlands are some of the most productive ecosystems on the planet; however, they can create inefficiencies when raising annual crops.

What options are available compared to drainage? How can wetlands, creeks and their riparian areas benefit agricultural systems beyond those already listed?

The ALUS program recognizes how a farmer's land management can benefit us all. The following is an example of an ALUS Wetaskiwin-Leduc project:

A tributary of Bigstone Creek lies within annual cropland. This area can drown out during wet years or be difficult to access at seeding time. A perennial buffer strip was established and ALUS supported a portion of project costs. Benefits to the producer include reduced input costs for the marginal area and annual payments for managing and maintaining ecosystem services, like cleaner water, generated from the project.

The Landowner Guide to the Alberta Wetland Policy helps landowners understand their rights and responsibilities when working in and around wetlands on their farm. Any activity that could impact a wetland is subject to authorization under the Alberta Water Act.

The guide can be found online at **wetlandsalberta.ca/landowners** under publications.

Fusarium Graminearum - a yearly threat

Fusarium head blight (FHB) is a serious fungal disease of cereal crops that affects kernel development., The disease results in significant losses to both grain yield and quality and triggers the production of mycotoxins. The main cause of FHB is the fungus Fusarium graminearum

Fusarium graminearum is a seed-borne pathogen, and infected seed or feed, along with infested crop residues such as straw, present the greatest risks of introducing or spreading it within areas of Alberta where it is not commonly found.

Historically, there has been less prevalence of the disease in our region; however, every year there is a threat of fusarium infection. Fusarium needs moisture and high temperatures to flourish, especially when cereal crops are flowering.

At a recent Leduc County Agricultural Services Board meeting, the lab manager of Seed Check Technologies provided a presentation on Fusarium graminearum testing results that reflect central Alberta had the perfect “storm of conditions” to promote fusarium growth in 2023. This may seem surprising considering the current drought risk; however, the rain that fell in 2023 came over a short period of time when temperatures were high and cereal crops were flowering.

FHB is a disease of economic importance in southern Alberta, especially under irrigation and potentially in wetter regions elsewhere, like central Alberta. Once the pathogen establishes, it will readily overwinter on infected crop residue. For this reason, it is important to have a management plan.

To read more, visit **alberta.ca/fusarium-head-blight** for a comprehensive list of management strategies and information. Discuss beneficial management practices related to FHB with your crop advisor or agricultural fieldman.

Kim’s corner

Adults are often faced with tough decisions. One of the presenters at the recent Drought Resilience for Grazers workshop hosted by Leduc County and County of Wetaskiwin reminded us that, “not making a decision is also a type of decision.” When we are faced with uncertainty, not acting at all can be more costly.

Drought is anticipated this growing season. Maybe we will be lucky, the rain will come and dugouts will overflow, but we should not count on that for a plan!

Focus on the things you can control, plan early and be kind to yourself and your team.

There are existing tools and organizations in place to help you now. Visit **leduc-county.com** or **county.wetaskiwin.ab.ca** to find local service information and upcoming events. Find information and tools at **alberta.ca/farming-in-dry-conditions** to assist with on-farm business management and production issues during dry conditions and periods of business stress.

Seek help if you need it; we are not meant to face difficult times alone.

Stay connected

Leduc County

Sign up for Ag Matters, Leduc County’s monthly agricultural e-newsletter that offers tips, articles and other important information at **www.leduc-county.com/agriculture**.

County of Wetaskiwin

Receive email and text message updates from the County of Wetaskiwin about agricultural services including mowing, spraying, the ALUS program, weeds, pest control and more.

Sign-up at **www.county.wetaskiwin.ab.ca/notify** and enter your email address. Then scroll down to News Flashes and select the letter (email) or phone (text) icon next to Agricultural to subscribe.

For assistance contact **780-361-6220**.

Contacts

Find many answers to your questions and more information at the County websites.

- County of Wetaskiwin No. 10: **www.county.wetaskiwin.ab.ca**
- Leduc County: **www.leduc-county.com**

Should you have any questions or wish to bring any matter to the attention of your Agricultural Service Board, please contact your county’s Agricultural Services Department.

- County of Wetaskiwin No. 10 Agricultural Services: **780-361-6226**
- Leduc County Agricultural Services: **780-955-4593**