

Western Stock Growers' Association

The latest news and updates from Western Stock Growers' Association

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Western Stock Growers' Association

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WSGA AGM Slotted for Summer Meeting

Our annual calendar mailout usually contains notification of our Annual General Meeting, which is normally held the afternoon before the welcome reception for Alberta Beef Industry Conference. The usual and normal have both flown the coop this year and we are not sure when or if they will be back. The 2021 ABIC has gone virtual (check out abiconference.ca) and AHS restrictions are too uncertain to confidently plan an in-person AGM event so the WSGA board made the decision to have this year's AGM as part of the 2021 WSGA Annual Summer Meeting.

The date for Summer Meeting is yet to be set, but we will be sending out notification along with a call for resolutions and a list of director elections. Stay tuned! We hope to see you there!



Summer Meeting 2020 Tour at Belvin Angus

A Message from the President



I thought that maybe we should just cut and paste the president's report from 2003, but it appears that has been scrubbed from the record as should 2020. It has been one thing after another beginning with the grazing lease disposition contract in January.

However, I am pleased to report that what began with Alberta Environment and Parks rolling out a new disposition (no longer a contract, they claimed) to 700 leaseholders with zero industry consultation has finally come to an end over 10 months later with the eleventh version in which they come back to referring to it as contract and a lease of land. AEP estimates that the backlog of renewals and transfers will be eliminated by April 2021.

It would be nice if Covid-19 would come to such an abrupt ending. When you elected me to this position, I was kind of hoping that I would get to work on some exciting things like the Grasslands Marketplace Pilot, but like the rest of the country, we were quickly stopped in our tracks only a week after our AGM.

As I am sure you are aware, our organization opposed another set aside program like the BSE era set aside that actually compounded the problems BSE created for the cow calf producer. The industry got a set aside program this time, but with some assurances to us that it would be better this time around. The jury is still out on that.

Despite Covid-19, WSGA had a very good year on several other fronts. In the spring, we initiated in 2020 is the Grassland Conservation Market Pilot and we have gathered together some great minds in an advisory committee for this. The Grasslands Conservation Market Advisory Committee is guiding the development of a grassland conservation exchange that will recognize the value that healthy ecosystems provide to society, while at the same time provide incentives for sustainable land management decisions. The main deliverable of the committee is a Grasslands Conservation Exchange Framework that aims to be a blueprint for the application of essential market components such as key principles, defining the ecosystem services to be traded, identifying the exchange process and creating a grasslands conservation index. It's a 2-year pilot at the end of which we plan to have actual ecosystem service benefits transactions within the voluntary market framework.

August saw us have a very successful, sold out summer meeting at Belvin Angus where we had excellent presentations on many pertinent industry issues. There wasn't a producer there who didn't come away with at least a couple real good ideas for improving their operation and the tour of Olds College was top notch. If next year's summer meeting is half as good, you won't want to miss it, especially now that the summer meeting will also be our 2021 AGM.

Lastly, our membership is on the rise. Led by VP Dana Fitzpatrick, we have a newly formed Membership Committee that, despite some level of socializing restrictions since March, is doing an excellent job of communicating the good work the Stockgrowers' have been doing. It shouldn't be secret that WSGA gets results for its membership so let's everyone really kick 2021 off by using the spare time you'll all have over the holidays and pick up the phone and convince just one other producer to take out a membership in our organization. If you're feeling especially generous and want to pay it forward, you may know a young producer would really benefit by being a member now or down the road someday. Buy them a membership! What better way to kick off the New Year?

Going forward, the main issues on the horizon right now are coal mining and recreational access, but who knows what's coming next! If anyone is itching to pitch in or just wants to chat, feel free to reach out to any of our board members as you can find all of our contact info on the website, wsga.ca!

Happy Trails and Merry Christmas!

Callum Sears

PILOT PROJECT: Grasslands Conservation Market

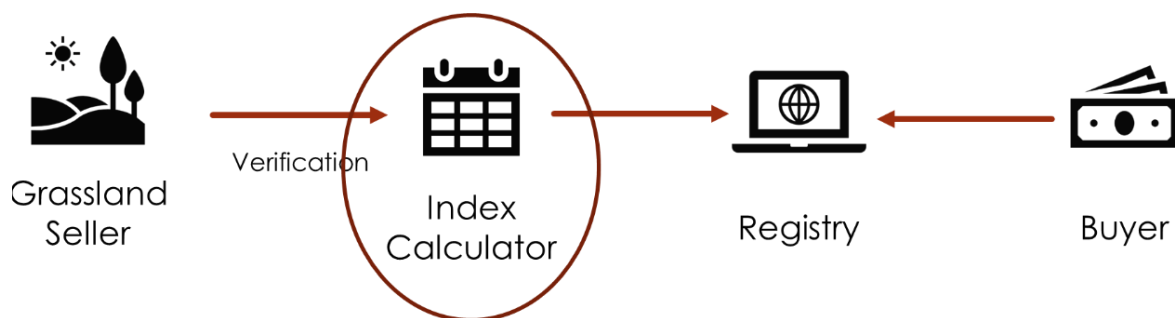
Currently, most ecosystem services benefits that are produced by rangeland ecosystems are not recognized in any marketplace. Markets for ecosystem services benefits offer a way of recognizing the value healthy ecosystems provide to society, while at the same time, providing incentives for valuable land management decisions. Markets for ecosystem services can reduce costs of complying with existing regulations and also generate new revenue streams. By focusing on outcomes, the amount of regulation around mitigation and environmental impact could be streamlined.

Western Stock Growers' Association is championing the Grasslands Conservation Markets Pilot, which will attempt to demonstrate the application of market concepts, tools and infrastructure (exchange, clearinghouse) through the creation of a grasslands market framework. Key principles for the market framework are that the market is voluntary, implementation is cost effective, transaction costs are as low as possible, the exchange is supported by science-based, credible and transparent knowledge and tools, the market is outcome-focused and will be continuously improved upon as science and technology are better understood.



How the Grassland Conservation Exchange Works:

Grassland ecosystem services and biodiversity outcomes are produced by ranchers, verified and calculated in an index, curated in a registry and then sold to beneficiaries via an exchange.



The Grassland Conservation Index is a weighted combination of ecosystem services that are economically, environmentally and socially relevant. The criteria for determining weight of each ecosystem service includes, availability of data, the accuracy and confidence in the science to measure the indicator and the relevance or importance to beneficiaries or buyers.

The pilot is closing in on it's first year of operation and the advisory committee has made progress despite been somewhat slowed and the work plan having to be adjusted due to the restrictions of COVID. We have made great strides in the journey to define the ecosystem services product and the next steps are to get the input of investors and define the exchange.

All of this progress could not have been done without the great minds at the advisory committee and the support of our partners EcoServices Network and Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute with funding from Alberta Innovates.

Canadian Land Access Systems (CLAS) can help you manage recreational access on private property

WSGA president, Callum Sears, has been recently been in conversations with CLAS as a way to manage recreational access on private land and potentially provide a solution for leases. There are many people who would like to have access to private land, especially for hunting, but there are often breakdowns in communication or the number of requests for access become overwhelming. Canadian Land Access System is a software platform to use on a computer or mobile device that helps landowners manage access through creating rules for access, a live calendar with capacity limits or blackouts, and many other features. This tool can help manage access for hunting or other recreation like hiking, photography, bird watching etc.

More on CLAS:

CLAS is an online platform for landowners to post their property, clearly stipulate their rules and manage property access. It removes all of the grey area around whether someone has permission or not and what the rules of the property are. For recreational users they are given the ability to find properties to access (hunting, biking, fishing, photography, horseback riding etc.) and interact with landowners in a clear and positive way without having to impose by showing up at their door at a potentially inconvenient time. As part of the terms and conditions, it also indemnifies both the landowner and the user while providing clear access instructions when submitting online requests and scanning a CLAS sign to access the property. You can visit www.canadianlandaccess.com.

CLAS is currently exploring new and innovative ways to provide new features for landowners and additional value for users while connecting people to the outdoors and their local producers. If you have suggestions as to how CLAS can help to improve your access management, or would like to see new features, please send a request to info@canadianlandaccess.com

For more information or to have someone help with posting your property, contact:

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Canadian Land Access Systems
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Important Information

Alberta's New Crown Land Vision - First Consultation

Recently the Alberta government, and specifically the department of Environment and Parks, released the new "Crown Land Vision" that speaks of creating partnerships to manage Crown land and 'untangling the many classifications, rules and regulations so they are easier to understand'. The document, which can be found on both the Government of Alberta and Alberta Grazing Leaseholders Association (AGLA) website as well as the AGLA Facebook page, has a heavy emphasis on improving outdoor recreation opportunities. The first consultation in the implementation of this Crown land vision is 'Sustainable Recreation' with an online survey available to the public until January 15. It is highly probable that this will affect our beef producers who operate on Crown land grazing leases as one of their legislative requirements is to allow reasonable recreation access. It is therefore it is important that our voices are heard. Please take the time to complete the survey at: <https://www.alberta.ca/sustainable-outdoor-recreation-engagement.aspx>

AER Consultation - Temporary Surface Pipelines

Temporary surface pipelines (TSPs) are temporary hoses or piping used to transport water on the surface of the ground for energy development. The AER started the TSP initiative as part of its work to enable industry to transport various types of alternative water. With the change from fresh water to 'alternative water' which is likely to contain low levels of contaminant, the impact of leakage or a larger release to the environment is much greater. In addition, there are environmental considerations in terms of damage to the grass resource underneath and around the pipeline and particular concerns around invasive weed species.

There is a YouTube video on the AER's temporary surface pipelines project (available with a YouTube search) and the link to the survey is: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7PGJQCN>. Please provide your feedback by Friday, January 15, 2021 at the latest.

Make sure we get what you send us!

Years ago WSGA made the decision to move from a bricks and mortar office to a virtual office which was a smart budgetary move and also created the necessity to change where we picked up the mail. WSGA rents a mailbox from UPS so our address contains both a box number and a street address in Okotoks. Both are required on our correspondence in order to get to us. We have had some mail go astray, some by fault of the post office, and the owner of the post office box has asked we send a note out for clarification. Our address, in its entirety is Box 179, #14 -900 Village Lane, Okotoks, AB T1S 1Z6.

ABIC Goes Virtual for 2021

First Speaker Session Now Available

Our 2021 programming will be delivered through a series of small business meetings and pop-up virtual experiences throughout the year.



Our first presenter, Dr. Jack Mintz, gives his thoughts and opinion about economic recovery post COVID-19. **The session is available now at www.abiconference.ca.**

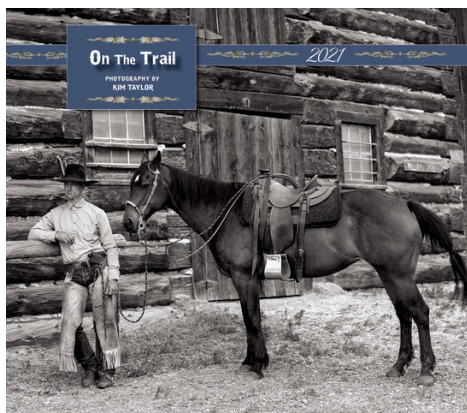
Dr. Jack Mintz is one of Canada's most distinguished and influential academics in public policy. Jack is the President's Fellow of the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary, and Chair of the Premier's Economic Recovery Council in Alberta.

Thank you to our ABIC sponsors for this session



We are excited to present a past favorite coming in January 2021
Stay Tuned!

Don't miss out on getting your Kim Taylor "On The Trail" Daytimer



\$27.95 each

On The Trail is a 8.5" x 7.5" pictorial day planner of our western heritage throughout Western Canada.

Available at

www.kimtaylor.com/product/on-the-trail-day-planner/