

MACKENZIE COUNTY



Mackenzie County



AGRICULTURAL SERVICE
BOARD



STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2026



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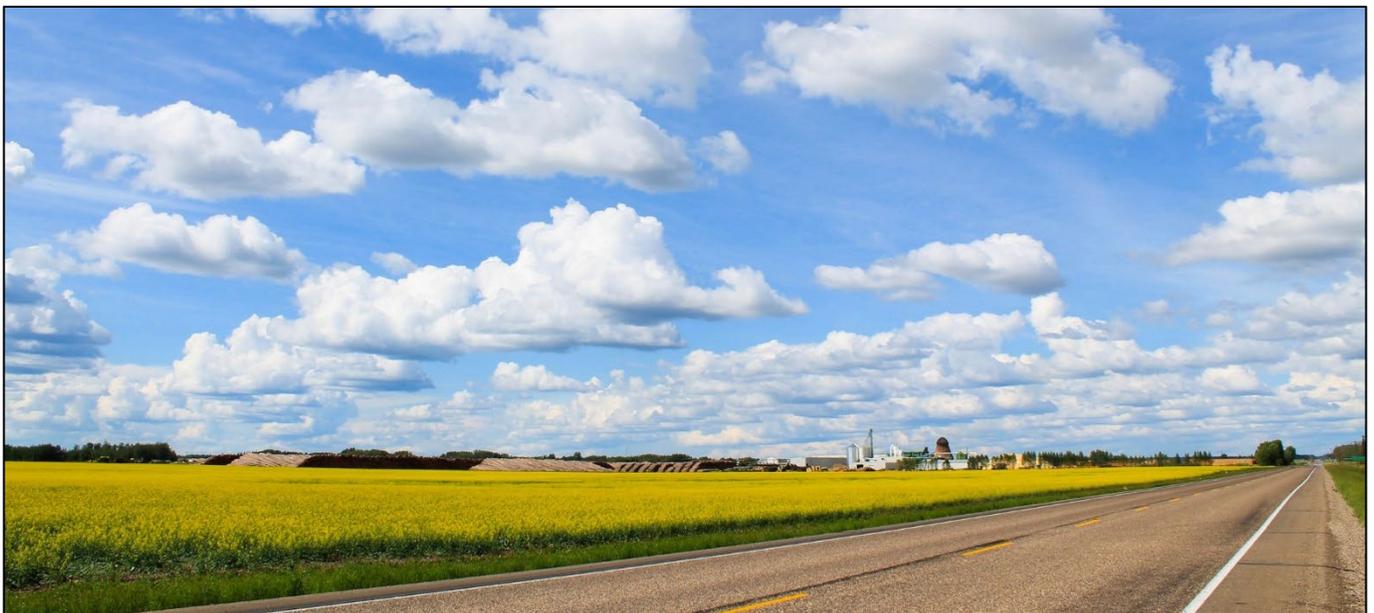
Introduction

Mackenzie County consists of 19,179,281 acres, which makes it the largest municipality in Alberta. Only 6% of the land mass is designated white zone, the remaining 94% designated green zone meaning only a fraction of the municipality is privately owned. In 2016, 581 farms covered a total of 595,648 acres of land. Since that time, there has been additional arable acres added; it is estimated at 630,000 acres in production. There is a mixture of crop, fallow, pasturelands, and other agricultural uses.

As a result of this agricultural land base, Mackenzie County Agricultural Service Board has been working with ratepayers to ensure best practices for water management, promotion of the agriculture industry, education and the maintenance of weed and pest control within our borders.

Mackenzie County not only supports but encourages agriculture investment such as value added processing and local food production to meet food security demands locally, provincially, and federally.

Mackenzie County is home to the youngest population in Canada with the average age of 28 years and the highest share of children per capita. Mackenzie County is dedicated to promoting the farming lifestyle to keep our agriculture industry active and thriving for future generations.



Vision

That the agriculture in our region continues with new value-added agricultural farms and businesses that grow our local economy and is sustainable for the future.

Mission

Encourage responsible and sustainable development of our agricultural industry by:

- Continually assessing and recognizing the needs and direction of the local agricultural industry;
 - Establishing common sense policy and promote practices favourable for a healthy agricultural climate in the region;
 - Identifying obstacles and working to resolve problems that arise.
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Values

- Be flexible – timely recognition when a change is needed to address agricultural industry issues;
- Be responsible – promotion of policies, practices and actions supporting sustainable local agricultural industry;
- Be fair – uniform and fair treatment for all while keeping the overall agricultural industry in mind;
- Be innovative – adapt to the changing agricultural environment and industry climate needs with new ideas and research;
- Be cooperative – work with stakeholders, other levels of government, ratepayers and neighbours.



Goals

Goal 1 –Promote sustainable agricultural policies and practices.

Strategy:

1. Gain understanding and stay current on Provincial Acts, regulations and land use policies.
2. Strong internal policies and programs to support responsible agricultural land production.
3. Enforce policies and bylaws that are mandated by the Agricultural Service Board Act, Weed Control Act, Agricultural Pest Act, Soil Conservation Act, and Animal Health Act.

Actions:

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| 1 | Attendance of ASB Conferences and AAAP In-service training. |
| 2 | Review of Agricultural Service Board Strategic Plan and Policies annually. |
| 3 | <u>Weed Control Act</u>
In accordance with the Mackenzie County ASB021 Weed Control Policy, regular inspections are done on private land and Green Zone (oilfield) to combat Noxious & Prohibited Noxious weeds.
The Roadside Spraying Program consists of a three-year rotation in which every road is blanket sprayed for maximum effectiveness.
Mackenzie County also has a roadside mowing program in which every road is mowed once a year.
Weed designation Bylaw 1314-23 Scentless Chamomile has been elevated to Prohibited Noxious in Mackenzie County. |
| 4 | <u>Agricultural Pest Act</u>
In accordance with Mackenzie County policies ASB014 Pest Control, ASB018 Clubroot of Canola, and ASB019 Fusarium Graminearum Policy; Administration intends to inspect fields for Clubroot, Fusarium, Blackleg, and participate in the provincial grasshopper survey.
Wild Boar Bylaw 1271-22 has been created to help administration differentiate between Wild Boar in legal production and at-large. |

5 Soil Conservation Act
Inspections of Flood Control Ditches for soil erosion. All new roads & ditches are grass seeded to help prevent erosion and assist with Weed Control.
Mackenzie County implemented a shelterbelt program.

6 Animal Health Act
Continued support for livestock producers through Veterinary Services Incorporated (VSI). Collaborate with Provincial Veterinarians during animal disease outbreaks in Mackenzie County.
Implement Mackenzie County Emergency Livestock Response Plan during natural disasters.
Work cooperatively with Wood Buffalo National Park and Alberta Beef Producers to monitor the movement of Bison in the area to minimize the risk transferring Brucellosis and Tuberculosis to cattle herds.

Goal 2 – Encourage development of new value-added agri-businesses.

Strategy:

Promoting and supporting local agricultural businesses.

Actions:

- 1 Prioritize local seminars & work with the Regional Economic Development Initiative (REDI) on agri-business diversification and opportunities for our producers.
- 2 Promote the Mackenzie Agriculture website and their information to increase local investment.
- 3 Articles on social media and newspaper on trends and opportunities.
- 4 Be involved and engaged with the Mackenzie Applied Research Association.
- 5 Provide access to resources and professionals who can support local producers.

Goal 3 – Appropriate land uses and preservation of agricultural lands within Mackenzie County and continual agricultural land expansion.

Strategy:

- 1. Ensure that agriculture land in Mackenzie County is utilized in a manner that coincides with provincial legislation and municipal statutory plans with consideration of soil classification and landscape.**
- 2. Support Council to lobby the provincial government to open additional land for agricultural use.**

Actions:

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| 1 | Collaborate with the provincial government in developing the Sub Regional Plans for the Lower Peace Region. |
| 2 | Adhere to and give recommendation to Council regarding the agriculture preservation in the Municipal Development Plan and other planning documents. |
| 3 | Provide comment and recommendation to the Municipal Planning Commission in regards to land development in rural areas. |
| 4 | Promote and advocate for the use of shelterbelts and wood buffers when clearing and breaking land for agricultural production. |
| 5 | Identify needs for expansion (consider loss of agricultural land on provincial scale) and areas best used for agricultural production. |
| 6 | Support Council to lobby for additional grazing opportunities on Crown lands. |

Goal 4 – Surface Water Management.

Strategy:

To promote water retention on agricultural lands.

Actions:

- 1 Develop and adhere to the Surface Water Management policy for municipal infrastructure.
- 2 Work with landowners for effective solutions to water management on municipal infrastructure and provide recommendation on private land issues primarily with water retention.
- 3 Promote the creation and implementation of private irrigation opportunities by applying for grants to support irrigation research and professional expertise in Mackenzie County.
- 4 Create policy to support producers with irrigation permitting, infrastructure, municipal land crossing, and water access.
- 5 Maintain and manage the water pump and pipe rental program.
- 6 In accordance with the Mackenzie County ASB013 Beaver Control policy, that administration collaborate with the local trappers association and affected producers to remove beaver dams on crown land that are flooding agriculture land and to also support with private land matters at ratepayers request.

Goal 5 – Advocate for retention of industry professionals and public education.

Strategy:

1. Retention of industry professionals.
2. Be active with public engagement and education.

Actions:

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| 1 | Advocate for agricultural based education through the Fort Vermilion School Division. |
| 2 | Support Council in their effort to recruit and retain more large animal veterinary services in the region. |
| 3 | Host and attend open houses and seminars that teach and share ideas with local producers. |
| 4 | Advertise and post information on social media. |

Conclusion

The Mackenzie County Agricultural Service Board Strategic Plan for 2024-2026 focuses on the current needs and initiatives of our local producers. This plan will direct administration and the ASB on the municipal priorities.

Currently the Agricultural Service Board consists of six voting members; two Councillors and three members at large with the Reeve as ex-officio.

The Agricultural department consists of a Director, Agricultural Fieldman, Administrative Officer, and seasonal Weed Inspectors to meet the needs of the municipality.

As directed by Council, the ASB and department work collaboratively to meet the strategic goals within this document.

This document shall be reviewed annually and updated in accordance with ASB and Council.