

County of Warner No. 5

Ag Service Board 2025-2029

Agriculture and Environment

SITUATION STATEMENT

Most of the economy of the County is based on agriculture, both in dryland and irrigation production. In addition to crop-diversified agriculture production.

TRADE MARKETS are served by major travel corridors. Provincial highways account for 314 km. Secondary Highways link Warner County to neighbouring M.D. of Taber, Counties of Cardston, Forty Mile and Lethbridge. There is 3,285 km of rural road network in the County.

RAIL SERVICE is supplied by two lines. CPKC line from Lethbridge to Coutts (105 km), where they interchange with BNSF at Sweetgrass, Montana. The only rail connection to the United States, in Alberta. A second east-west Forty Mile Rail short-line runs on the former CPR Stirling Sub (64 km) east to Foremost.

RURAL POPULATION directly involved in Agriculture is 4,290 including hamlets of New Dayton and Wrentham. Urban centers include Raymond 4,199 Milk River 824 Stirling 1,164 Warner 364 Coutts 224 (Stats Canada, 2021)

489 farms (including 25 Hutterite Colonies and 2 large farm operations)

137 Beef cattle ranching and farming, including feedlots

49 Hay production

248 oilseed/grain farming

61 other miscellaneous crop farming, vegetable, fruit, nut, greenhouse and tree nursery.

705,245 ac of cropland in 2021, increasing 1.96% from 691,708 in 2016. The barley segment had the largest increase over the last five years, increasing 16.6% to 107,064 ac

Canola 107,154 ac

Durum 126,839 ac non-durum wheat 108,364 ac

Oats 2,841 ac

Other 252,983 ac

Pastureland 385,665 ac Tame or seeded pasture 72,996 ac Natural land for pasture 312,669 ac

Summer fallow 28,736 ac

IRRIGATION

Total use of irrigation farming is concentrated in the Raymond Irrigation District (RID) via St. Mary River Irrigation System that delivers water to 52,000 ac of irrigation land, up 13% from 46,500 in 2020. The district has over 450 water users, increasing 33.33% from 300, including municipal, farm, acreage, and habitat. 170 km of closed pipelines and 90 km of earth canals. St. Mary Irrigation District (5,000 acres), and Milk River Irrigation (7,000 acres). There are 14 Water Access (Co-ops/Users) within the County.

SOILS

The County of Warner encompasses three regions, the Eastern and Western Alberta Plains, and Southern Alberta Uplands. The soil degradation issue affecting producers is saline seeps which occupy approximately 155,716 acres. The local climate is influenced by the Milk River Upland and the Sweetgrass Hills. Surface soils within the County are brown to dark brown on the plains, to black on the western side of the Milk River Ridge. Medium textured soils, Chernozemic, with minor amounts of Solonchic, Gleysolic, and Regosolic. Southern Alberta is known for its

frequent westerly high winds that are most evident from October to December. As a result, wind erosion can be a very real problem in this area. Source: AAFC

WEEDS

Prohibited Noxious weeds present in the County of Warner include Knapweeds, Purple Loosestrife and Nodding thistle. Noxious weeds present include Baby's Breath, Black Henbane, Blueweed, Burdock, Hoary Cress, Hound's-tongue, Leafy Spurge, Ox-eye-Daisy, Yellow and Dalmatian toadflax. *Scentless Chamomile elevated to Prohibited Noxious by municipal Bylaw #866-11 to enable effective management of weeds negatively impacting agriculture.

CROP PESTS

Crop diseases such as fusarium, clubroot, sclerotinia and blackleg are growing concerns in the municipality. Crop insect pests such as Diamondback moths, Bertha armyworm, and grasshoppers, as well as Richardson Ground Squirrels also have a huge economic impact when outbreaks beyond threshold levels appear.

HISTORY

LEGISLATIVE STREAM: Activities, Programs, and Services

Ag Pest Act (APA) Soil Conservation Act (SCA) and Weed Control Act (WCA) appointed inspectors carry out legislated duties.

Council approves Appeal Committees to meet legislation (APA, WCA)

Provide support during animal health outbreaks and livestock emergency preparedness under the Animal Health Act (AHA)

Extension: provide relevant info, government programming and services to producers that support their economic sustainability. (semi-annual newsletters, social media, County website, Facebook. Information center available to producers to find educational materials) Extension activities including tours, information sessions, workshops, demos.

Vertebrate/Invertebrate Surveillance & Predation Programs i.e. rabies, rats, wild boar, aquatic invasive species, coyotes, Richardson Ground Squirrels.

Monitor crop pests in the county. Participate in the Provincial Surveys crop pests, weeds, and disease – as requested by Agriculture & Irrigation (AGI), Agriculture Canada (AAFC) and including Weed mapper.

Roadside spraying program, Mechanical vegetation management.

Roadside seeding,

Chemical sales program – Rozol for Richardson Ground Squirrel control.

Provide services to agriculture producers such as tree spraying and bin fumigation.

Offer Farmer Pesticide Courses (FPC) to producers in collaboration with adjacent municipalities.

Offer specialized agricultural equipment rentals, double offset disc, slide-in-sprayer, tree moving, skunk traps, seed drills.

Participating in the AAFC Cleanfarms Grain bag and twine recycling drop off at ASB Shop yard.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STREAM – environmental extension

Based on the results from a previous assessment, feedback from County Council members, workshops/and extension event program evaluations have provided a lot of feedback regarding concerns and environmental issues from the ratepayers of the County of Warner.

The needs within the County have been easy to identify through working with ratepayers and interested partners. Salinity has always been a concern within the County of Warner. Water Quality is also identified as being a large concern as many of the towns and villages in the county

pull their drinking water from the Milk River Ridge Reservoir or the Milk River, which are both affected by agricultural practices and contaminated run-off water. The Milk River Watershed takes in a large portion of the County and therefore many concerned stakeholders. Red Creek is a southern tributary to the Milk River and has environmental concerns of its own, the water quality continues to be addressed in this seasonal creek. Through various activities, farm visits, workshops and abundant working partnerships, our priorities will continue being addressed and beneficial management practices promoted.

Milk River Ridge Reservoir Water Quality Stewardship Initiative

Ridge Reservoir Stewardship Group

Milk River Ranchers Stewardship Group

Red Creek Stewardship Group

Working in collaboration with Milk River Watershed Council of Canada on various projects

Extension-related activities including tours, information sessions, workshops, demonstrations

Provide a semi-annual newsletter

Information center available to producers to find educational materials

Promote beneficial management practices for producers

Support Extension to provide information and technical assistance to producers Sustainable CAP Programs (RALP, OFEP, and Water Programs)

Assist producers with getting started and completing Environmental Farm Plans

Offer equipment for producers to use such as No-Till Drill, Solar Watering Systems, Pasture pipeline plow

The County of Warner is heavily invested in the support of the natural watershed function and ecological integrity of the Milk River Ridge Reservoir. This investment is directed to improve the long-term resiliency of the watershed to flood and drought and the improvement of water quality of the watershed. The Milk River Ridge Reservoir Water Quality Stewardship Initiative was developed to explore, assess and implement strategies that result in the improved management (and where possible, restoration) of the provincial land corridor and adjacent private lands with the aim of maintaining or improving water quality in Ridge Reservoir and the water conveyance and storage facilities that are connected with Ridge Reservoir. The initiative conserves 4,800 acres of corridor lands of the reservoir.

LEGISLATION

Acts & Regulations

Agricultural Service Board Act

[***Agricultural Service Board Act***](#)

Weed Control Act

[***Weed Control Act***](#)

Ag Pest Act

[***Agricultural Pests Act***](#)

Soil Conservation Act

[***Soil Conservation Act***](#)

Animal Health Act

[***Animal Health Act***](#)

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