



AWES
Agroforestry & Woodlot
Extension Society

Agroforestry and Woodlot Extension Society

Strategic Plan for 2018 - 2021

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This Strategic Plan was developed with input provided during 2017-2018 by AWES Board members, staff, and partners.

Introduction to AWES and the Strategic Planning Process

The Agroforestry Woodlot Extension Society is a registered not-for-profit society with members from government, industry conservation agencies including the Woodlot Association of Alberta. AWES evolved from the former Woodlot Extension Program (WEP) which operated as a joint venture of participating organizations with project funds held by the Woodlot Association of Alberta. WEP was established in 2000 to provide extension services to landowners and to encourage the environmental stewardship and sustainable management of the more than 3.6 million hectares of privately owned forested land in Alberta.

In its 10 years of operation WEP established a successful track record advancing sustainable woodlot management, agroforestry, innovation and value-added opportunities, and the adoption of beneficial management practices on private forested and cultivated land in Alberta. WEP's decision to incorporate as AWES was based on the desire of the partners to bring WEP to a fully independent, financially accountable Society as one step in the process of increasing membership and funding partners.

The AWES Strategic Plan is a living document that builds on the foundation of the WEP strategic direction and successful operation. It reflects the commitment of program partners in industry, government and conservation agencies to carry forward the core values of WEP as the core values of AWES. Consensus of the AWES Board of Directors (interim and established) was reached in drafting the AWES Strategic Plan.

Government and corporate policy with regards to management of trees in the agricultural landscape are also expected to evolve and influence AWES strategic management. Changes in the environment will be continually assessed relative to their impact on AWES and the WEP. The AWES Strategic Plan will be reviewed at each annual general meeting to ensure strategic consistency. It will allow for flexibility in AWES yearly operational planning with enhanced transparency and accountability.

Current AWES Members, May 2018

- 1) Alberta Agriculture & Forestry
- 2) Capital Power Corporation
- 3) County of Grande Prairie
- 4) Daishowa-Marubeni International Ltd.
- 5) Vanderwell Contractors Ltd.
- 6) Woodlot Association of Alberta
- 7) Norbord Inc
- 8) Red Deer County
- 9) AAFMP (College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists)
- 10) Mountain View County
- 11) Northern Sunrise County
- 12) Tree Time Services Inc
- 13) Parkland County
- 14) Alberta Conservation Association
- 15) Brazeau County
- 16) Lacombe County
- 17) Flagstaff County

Agroforestry and Woodlot Management

By encouraging landowners to manage their forests sustainably, AWES addresses the issue of agroforestry and woodlot in agricultural areas. In aiming for agricultural sustainability, we recognize that trees cover a significant portion of the agricultural landscape. Sustainable agriculture has to consider the role trees play in the agricultural landscape. Society members are united in their belief that sustainable management of more than 3.6 million hectares of privately-owned forestland in Alberta's agricultural areas will continue to yield important social, economic and environmental benefits.

These benefits include enhanced wildlife habitat, soil conservation, long-term preservation of water quantity and quality, increased recreational opportunities, and the development of a wide range of forest products and services based on sustainable forest management.

Woodlots in Alberta

Agriculture has been the economic mainstay of Alberta since its earliest settlement days. Deciduous forests on farmland were perceived until the 1980's as an impediment to agricultural production. Emphasis was placed on forest removal, even on marginal soils. Lacking a significant market for timber, cleared trees were piled and burned.

That decades old approach changed in 1984, when the first large forest company to utilize aspen in Alberta opened a plant in Edson. Others followed, and the demand for aspen timber grew rapidly. As the trend to fell private forests for their economic value escalated through the early 1990s, the practice came to be denounced as "forest liquidation." Tens of thousands of hectares of private land were deforested before the turn of the century due to pressure exerted by expanding agriculture businesses, the prospering oil and gas industry and increased demand of the forest sector. More importantly, the negative impacts on wildlife, soil and water began to arouse public concern.

To reverse that trend, while recognizing the high value Albertans place on the rights of private landowners, the federal and provincial governments agreed in 1992 to set up an extension program aimed at educating Albertans, particularly landowners, about the benefits of woodlots. This Canada-Alberta Partnership Agreement in Forestry that resulted in the formation of the not-for-profit society, Woodlot Association of Alberta. Its mission is to promote sustainable woodlot management.

Under the federal/provincial extension program, workshops, on-site consultations with landowners and technical services delivery around the province were organized, and the Woodlot Association of Alberta grew rapidly. A Woodlot Policy Conference held in 1996 concluded extension was essential to encourage sustainable forest management practices on private land. That same year, the Canada-Alberta Forest Partnership Agreement in Forestry that resulted in the formation of the not-for-profit society, Woodlot Association of Alberta, came to an end. Loss of this funding dealt a devastating blow to private woodlot extension

services. Despite WAA efforts, support to landowners declined and forest liquidation continued.

Agroforestry

While there are similarities between managed woodlots and agroforestry there are also important differences. Woodlots that are considered by AWES occur in agricultural areas and are so often associated with agricultural operations, however, to be a true agroforestry practice there needs to be intentional activities that lead to intensive, integrated and interactive management of agricultural and tree components. The Association for Temperate Agroforestry has a well accepted definition of agroforestry that can be easily accessed for a complete description of agroforestry.

Woodlots are blocks of trees that are most often native but can include blocks of planted trees. A woodlot has no intentional integration with agricultural activities. While the management of trees in woodlots can range between intensive or non-existent they are not being managed in an integrated way for the production of another crop that is agricultural. While woodlots are normally managed for their timber products, they often contain a diversity of plants and trees that supports biodiversity, water to be purified and provide excellent recreational values.

Agroforestry on the other hand is an intensive land management system that optimizes the benefits from the biological interactions created when trees and/or shrubs are deliberately combined with crops and/or livestock. Management is aimed at maintaining more than one kind of a crop, which is complementary rather than competitive. The result is stability and increased profitability per unit area. While shelterbelts are a common form of agroforestry there are few clear examples of other kinds of agroforestry, such as alley cropping and silvopasture, practiced in Alberta. There are excellent opportunities in Alberta for the development of agroforestry practices in the area of new types of shelterbelts, alley cropping, silvopasture systems and riparian forest buffer strips.

Woodlot Extension Program (WEP)

The detrimental impact of forest liquidation versus management was recognized by diverse interests; including forest companies, conservation agencies and governments. Having established some common ground through the now defunct Canada-Alberta Partnership Agreement in Forestry, representatives from these groups designed a new approach and set up the Woodlot Extension Pilot Program (WEPP) in 2000 under the direction of a multi-stakeholder advisory group. In 2004 a management committee, selected from the larger advisory group, set goals and objectives for a permanent Woodlot Extension Program (WEP). The partnership brings the range of required expertise, people power as well as funding. WEP was created to fill in an existing gap in extension services and private land forestry in this province. The key to the program's success is the cooperative nature of the partnership. The benefits of the partnership are confirmed by the large pool of diverse resources and expertise generated by WEP Partnership. By leveraging the strength of various partners, the program enjoys reduced costs and optimizes the social, economic and environmental benefits beyond those which could be achieved by more limited partnership.

AWES Vision:

To provide forestry and agroforestry based solutions, products and services that are increasingly used to enhance the social, economic and environmental values for private and public lands in Alberta.

Vision - Supporting Statements:

- AWES will offer products and services (extension, promotion, consultation) to its clients and members.
- Through extension, promotion and facilitation AWES will enhance the capacity and knowledge of organizations operating within our scope to realize our vision.

Supporting Policy & Resource Statements:

- AWES Board will operate as a policy board that provides support and direction to AWES staff.
- An annual operation plan will provide the financial means to increase the number of programs and projects at multiple locations to enable the efficient and effective delivery of AWES programs and services.
- A marketing plan imbedded in the operational plan will assist in guiding future opportunities for funding and partnerships.

AWES Mandate:

Due to the lack of organizations, companies and agencies delivering tree centered solutions within the province of Alberta, a group of agencies and organizations established AWES to address the economic, social and environmental values of trees. Through on the ground projects, AWES facilitates the implementation of practices to realize these values.

Critical Issues & Priorities for Strategic Plan to Address

Core Strategies

1. Develop new and maintain existing strategic partnerships to provide a sustainable platform of growth.
2. Establish sustainable revenue sources to generate income to fund core services.
3. Enhance exposure through use of various effective marketing applications.
4. Track requests that AWES is unable to deliver to provide information for future planning needs.
5. Effectively use a strategic plan as a guiding document.

6. Develop a current annual operating plan that will deliver on the above and ensure sustainability of the organization through a variety of funding sources.

Strategic Goals & Targets

Goal #1

Stakeholders will increasingly use AWES as a credible provider of forestry and agroforestry centered solutions.

Objectives

- Increased use of extension activities by an average of 25%.
- Increased implementation of forestry and agroforestry practices.
- Increased regional availability of AWES services through partnerships (agreements with 1 complimentary organization operating outside of traditional service areas) and staffing (1 additional permanent staff).
- Improvement of services across communication platforms (i.e. virtual, paper, and in-person).

Strategic Targets for Goal #1

- Increase in the partnerships used to deliver products and services
 - Year 1 – Year 3– Increase current partnerships by 25%.
- Increase in the delivery of products and services (i.e. presentations and tree planting projects)
 - Year 1 – Year 3- products and services by 25%.
- Develop new and/or maintain existing strategic partnerships with complimentary organizations for the purpose of improving efficiency and increasing capacity. Partners may change periodically based on relevance and benefits realized by both parties.
 - Year 1 – Year 3 – Maintain 5 strategic partnerships, and develop 3-4 new partnerships
- Establish a full time presence in north-western Alberta for the delivery of products and services
 - Year 1 Year 2– increase the value of AWES in NW Alberta by delivery of at least 6 workshops. Increase presence and partnerships of AWES to explore funding options.
- Expand the use of AWES website and information database to increase the number of clients
 - Year 1--Year 3: Increase website traffic by 150%.

- Expand communication platforms to maintain and increase stakeholder knowledge and engagement
 - Year 1—Year 3:
 - Increase distribution of AWES Newsletter by 400%.
 - Increase Facebook presence to 450 plus followers.

Core Strategies to Attain Goal #1

1. Maintain existing and develop new strategic partnerships to provide a sustainable platform of growth.
2. Enhance exposure through use of various effective marketing applications.

Goal #2

Establish sustainable funding to support the balanced delivery and growth of AWES programs, staff, policies, services and projects.

Objectives

- Balanced annual budgets are delivered at the AGM to be approved by Board.
- Diversify and increase funding to ensure robustness of organization.

Strategic Targets for Goal #2

- Develop and implement a funding model for organization and programs
 - Year 1 – Year 3: Implement and update funding models.
- Balanced funding model is implemented for AWES programs, projects and services.
 - Year 1 – Year 3: A balanced budget is achieved and maintained.
- Increase income from consulting and planting services to 40% of general revenue.
 - Year 1—Year 3: 40% consulting revenue.
- Secure 40% of grant revenue from non-government sources.
 - Year 1 – Year 3: Secure 40% of grant revenue from non-government sources.
- Increase revenue for organization by 50%
 - Year 1 – Year 3: Increase revenue for organization by 40%.

Core Strategies to Attain Goal #2

1. Maintain existing and develop new strategic partnerships to provide a sustainable platform of growth.
2. Establish sustainable revenue sources to generate income to fund core services.
3. Enhance exposure through use of various effective marketing applications.
4. Track requests that AWES is unable to deliver to provide information for future planning needs.
5. Effectively use strategic plan as a guiding document.

Goal # 3

Board is able to transition from an operational to a policy Board.

Objectives

- Policy board governance model for AWES is successfully implemented.
- Strategic plan is supported by an operational plan to guide staff activities.
- Adequate human resource and financial policies are developed to guide staff.

Strategic Targets for Goal #3

- Financial policies are implemented to support the policy board governance model
- Human resources policies are implemented to support the policy board governance model
- Management and evaluation policies are implemented to support policy board in achieving strategic goals.
 - Year 1 – Year 3: Review and familiarize staff and board with existing draft policies.
Finalize drafts for policies.
Implement policies.

Core Strategies to Attain Goal #3

1. Effectively use strategic plan as a guiding document.
 - Develop a yearly operational plan that is linked to the strategies and goals in the strategic plan
 - Develop a multi-year and multi-sector marketing plan that will assist in the delivery of the goals focused around expansion and funding of the organization
 - Work with the Board to achieve goal #3 of a move to a strategic approach for the Board.