

Saskatchewan Municipal Best Practice



Co-operation for Growth - The Regional Groundwater Developing and Mapping Project

CONTACT

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THE ISSUE

The RM of Gull Lake No. 139 plays a leadership role in bringing eight municipalities (RMs of Gull Lake, Webb, Carmichael, and Piapot, Town of Gull Lake, and the Villages of Carmichael, Tompkins and Webb) together in a co-operative effort to build community and economic development for the area.

They developed a common goal, pooling of resources, sharing of information, and keeping in touch with the needs and concerns of the urban and rural communities in the area and Southwest.

THE NEED

The RM needed to develop this practice to ensure area rural communities' viability and to develop sustainable economic growth in the area. The RM of Gull Lake was faced with the development of proposed Intensive Livestock Operations, environmentally sensitive lands, and limited water resources. They also discovered there was very information available on water in the municipality.

CREATING THE PRACTICE

To help with the design of the practice, information was obtained by open discussion, developing a common goal, pooling the participating municipalities' resources, and sharing of information.

The first phase of the co-operation for growth, the regional groundwater developing and mapping project (a pilot project), was completed in 2007. It included obtaining data on water wells, water quality testing, and GPS mapping of all groundwater wells within member municipalities.

APPROVAL

To create and implement the practice, the RM needed to convince SaskWater to share their data and maps with the committee and the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA).

They obtained approval through numerous consultation meetings with senior and technical staff of the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority. They also got special data waiver agreements from all participating landowners within the project municipalities.

CONSULTATION

As part of the approval process, the RM had many consultations with PRFA, the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, and Landowners.

IMPLEMENTATION

To implement the practice, a committee was formed of two representatives from each RM and Town, and one from each Village. This provided input from all municipalities and feedback to the various councils on a regular basis. The Program Coordinator and the committee were responsible for organizing and implementing the required work.

RESOURCES REQUIRED

Budget

The project funding is based on an assessment/population formula: 50 per cent by rural municipalities as it affects and will benefit the rural municipalities far more than the urban, and 50 per cent grants. They spent \$71,860 on the Regional Groundwater Developing and Mapping Project.

The ongoing operational costs to April 2008 are \$78,082 for providing the Agriculture-Environmental Group Plan Coordinator and for the completion of the data mapping project.

Staff

The project required work and thorough communication within all participating municipalities. For human resources requirements, the RM of Gull Lake hosts informal gatherings with council members, the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority provided personnel to conduct water testing, the PFRA is providing the mapping technician, and the RM of Gull Lake provides the coordination.

Infrastructure

Capital costs for this project include: water tank loading facility; life-lease housing phase 1; reconstruction of highway no. 37; and an energy interpretive center.

EVALUATION

There were many benefits of initiating this practice for all municipalities involved. They include: adjacent municipalities working together more effectively; much-needed information is made available to everyone; group meetings are proving to be successful and productive; and the group has identified more projects already underway (Gull Lake Interpretive Center, Life-lease Housing, reconstruction of Highway No. 37 partnership).

Some of the challenges they faced in this project included the need to remain flexible as different projects could require different partners. They also discovered that public meetings were not exceptionally successful.

LESSONS LEARNED

Through this process, the municipality learned that it takes a lot of work to change council's thinking from individual municipalities to the larger community concept for the "good of all." It also takes leaders with a positive outlook and perseverance to overcome negatives attitudes that could impact progress.

The RM also formed valuable relationships with surrounding municipalities to build a larger community than just looking within its own boundaries. Initially, there was a reluctance to share data between agencies; but, in the end it is the landowners that benefit from that data obtained from the water testing.