

Peace River Agriculture Strategic Planning Society

Title of Project: Peace River Prospects - Agriculture in the BC Peace

Final Report

January 1, 2000 to April 30, 2001

Contact Person - Sue Hansen or Kate O'Neil

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Email: katmyo@pris.bc.ca (Kate O'Neil)

Objectives:

The goal of this project is to build a lasting vehicle and tradition for the regular publication of agriculture news, events and technical information, which includes the various projects initiated by the region's commodity groups. The target audience is primarily agricultural and rural, with a secondary target audience being the urban public.

Accomplishments:

At this time Peace Prospects has one primary writer, a co-ordinator and rural writers and cartoonists submitting material, we receive regular material from the Cross-Commodity Manager, from the PFRA, and North Peace 4-H groups, and notice of special events from both Agriculture Ministry offices.

In general our writers have no difficulty accessing stories from producers and Ministry of Agriculture staff. It should be noted that the Ministry offices clip all Peace agriculture stories and send them to the Ministry in Victoria - very often PRASPS is supplying the only material about the agriculture sector.

We continue to have a weekly agriculture page in both the Alaska Highway News and the Peace River Block News that runs Friday and Thursday respectively. This spring a simple promotional campaign will start in the rural areas to let residents know the Friday edition of the Alaska Highway News has an agriculture page.

While tracking our success is difficult we have had specific feedback from 4-H, PROPA and the Sheep producers, individuals and the Peace River Regional District, as well the Northern Horizon staff said our contribution has definitely enhanced their newspaper and they have received support from advertisers as a result.

Letters of support are attached to this report.

Tasks in Progress:

The Northern Horizon continues to be published twice monthly. The two daily newspapers will continue to publish on their respective days. The Alaska Highway News publishes its largest paper on Fridays and it felt this is the best paper of the week for both rural and urban residents. It is hoped the promotion of this paper will provide feedback about the quality of stories and general coverage. We also hope it will generate more material.

PRASPS would like to see these pages promoted to the rural areas. The agriculture community can assist with the development of this project by purchasing advertising on these pages to specifically sponsor the agriculture page.

In general support of the papers by purchasing advertising for an event or program is a good idea. Very often news follows these announcements and it is also the goal of this project to encourage reporters to cover agriculture on a regular basis.

We are not having any difficulty in finding material for our writers. Essentially we have four experienced writers, capable of covering the news oriented stories, with the rest making contributions in terms of being at various events to take pictures and offering cartoons and the so-called soft news or human-interest pieces.

The process now is to write fresh material each week for the daily papers (same for both). Kate receives this and edits it before sending it to the newspapers. The editors rely on her to prioritise stories in case of space limitations, since they don't understand the merit of one Ag story over another. Every two weeks Kate prepares the material for submission to Peace Prospects. Every attempt is made to send the very pertinent and timely stories to the Northern Horizon for the specific agriculture audience.

Finances:

Staff has assessed the budget with an eye to streamlining costs and at this time there does not seem to be any gains to be made. There is little doubt that the Northern Horizon is read primarily by a rural and agricultural audience. While the two daily papers don't cost anything for printing it does cost for writing, which is then cycled into the Northern Horizon - a cost that would have to be incurred anyway.

There has been a saving in having all aspects of production coming from one source.

Please see attached for cost breakdown

Total cost December 15, 2000 to April 30, 01 \$7,312.33

Summary, comments, conclusions:

As of the third quarterly report it was evident that the addition of the daily papers does cost more both in terms of managing and writing. There is never a shortage of material, although we could use a lot more feedback on events and small items - we call them briefs. In order to fill a daily page, which is usually half filled with ads. It takes approximately two or three stories with a photo to fill that half space. If we can supply the news both papers will attempt to book space for us, but we must follow through and be consistent. Our budget is based on supplying approximately 1,200 words at 21 cents each, photos are \$15 each and \$5 for the second photo for the same story. Briefs are to be supplied by the editor (Kate O'Neil).

Since we do not pay the dailies for the space we use we are at their mercy in terms of what space they give us to fill each week. This is a two-way relationship. We promise to deliver and they promise *some* space. It is working well.

In an attempt to keep our costs consistent, we have asked for a better idea of what space we will be given each week. The editor of the Peace River Block News agreed to allow space based on us consistently delivering three stories of approximately 400-450

words, with two photos, and 5-6 briefs running the length of the page (approx. 50 words each. Note we have not been able to meet this requirement, partially due to cost and partially due to availability of event items, short notes and reports. The same format will be asked of the Alaska Highway News.

The stories published since mid September, approximately 75 pieces, has covered events - including tours, issues, news from various groups, a variety of interest pieces.

The process of planning each week and preparing submitted material for publication takes longer than anticipated. While we have successfully attracted several writers, all the work needs to be edited to be acceptable to the daily paper in terms of press style and to simply tighten the work. We anticipate being able to arrive at more consistent costs - not necessarily lower, when the format change is in effect with both papers.

We have provided excellent coverage of events and news in the past three months. It is still important that members of the agriculture community realize they can send material to us or be interviewed by us and contact with all groups will take place before mid January. The Northern Horizon would like us to have a regular calendar of events and help from the various producer groups is necessary for this.

Sandra Burton is an invaluable source of information and stories about the results from funded projects.

In closing we have determined that the cost of the Northern Horizon cannot be reduced unless discarded. The daily page is usually two half pages or a portion of one page. In order to achieve a consistent look that closely approximates a page we have to supply a regular quantity of material otherwise they use stories according to what space allows, which may only be one long one.

It is still cheaper to publish material this way compared to having a newsletter or an insert in the paper. We do not pay for postage and the Northern Horizon has a very large circulation that would be costly to duplicate.

A couple of our writers do submit the stories they write for PRASPS to other papers. Jim Sinclair started working for PRASPS more than a year ago as a freelance writer and also worked for the Mirror in Dawson Creek; as well he has developed several other freelance opportunities. Brenda Birley has been a consistent contributor and has also developed a freelance connection with three other agriculture publications. All the other writers are rural and live primarily in the South Peace - they submit material now and then.

It would be a great help to us if PRAD would provide approved applicants with our contact information. As well, encouragement from the PRAD board to make use of us as a promotional and information tool both for their project or organization, as well as for public interest and to promote PRAD's contribution.

The following list describes the stories we have covered.
It should also be noted we have attended several AGMs and important workshops and seminars.

December - Value Added group plans to promote Peace River products - Peace Value Added Food and Ag association
Canadian Cattle ID program offers new choices -submitted
Farm Credit Corporation can now achieve more
Regional Cattlemen's AGM raises hot concerns
January - you can be self-sufficient - chickens can bring you 3000 eggs in their first year
Seminar will help cattlemen optimize the latest record keeping techniques - submitted
Coming events
Niche market pork up to standard - organic
Forage and turfseed markets and trends topic of conference
Making the best of Peace products - pre announcement of Branding the Peace
Grain Growers of Canada seeking membership - BCGPA AGM
Global Grain marketing outlook - BCGPA AGM covered
A Canadian Stamp of recognition - cattle ID program workshop covered
Parsons Rides again
Parsons Returning to Ottawa
Seminars abound for Peace Farmers
Parsons never more determined
Saskatoon conference will end up helping local farmers
Errol Anderson - PRASPS value added speaker "Watching the Market could protect farmers
Submitted - Wildlife symposium agenda and speaker bios
February - Parsons continues the fight
Pea markets opening up for Peace farmers
BCGPA not backing local farmer in Ottawa rally
AGN for the PRFSA in March
Striving for crop failure in the Peace
Peace River Cattlemen's Association needs more members
Branding the Peace a hot topic
Peace River regional cattlemen's association discusses wolves
Peace Ranchers tackle wildlife
Ravelli BC's representative for Canadian Grain Growers Association
Forage and Turfseed trends and markets topic at conference
The future landscape of farming and the ecosystem - Western Grazing conference
2001 BCGPA board of directors

Partners in Solutions - Wildlife symposium
2001 Peace region forage seed association
March - 28th Annual bred bulls sale x3
Branding endorsed by Canada
Seed registry likely on the way out
Sexsmith to hold workshop March 17
Farmer's take exception to Ferry's column
North Peace 4-H communication competition results
Submitted - Dr. Holl speaker for Forage Seed conference and AGM x2
Fescue Seed research successful - first stage of development of a heartier fescue achieved
Organic seed breeding program needed locally
Submitted - Jack Zimmer bio and Forage seed market not looking good
Pre conference information - Forage & Turfseed Trends & markets
Cows can benefit the greenhouse gas wars
CWB streamlines for organic producers
SMMM lambs a new meat lamb in the north Peace
Eggs - producers' battle with BC Egg Marketing Board impacts on all small egg
producers
CWB sets record straight on farmer subsidies
Labour standards decision costly for Ranchers
Submitted - Peace River Transportation Adjustment Fund x3
Submitted - BCGPA AGM Agenda
Interview submitted - New Manager for the BCGPA's variety and Agronomic Trials
Submitted - Peace Region Forage Seed Association production and marketing seminar
agenda
Submitted - New Crop Options - Native Grass Seed
Branding the Peace x2
Submitted - Forage workshop greenhouse gases
PROPA Seed workshop

The Northern Horizon

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December 13, 2000

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like to take a moment to emphasize our appreciation for the content provided to the Northern Horizon by PRASPS. Their efforts have enabled us to better inform the agricultural community of news and issues important to them. We understand the articles and information are extremely well read. It is my hope that this partnership will continue in the future for the benefit of all concerned.

Sincerely,



Susan Rand
Assistant Publisher

December 6, 2000

Peace River Agriculture Development Fund
Attn: Garnet Berge, Chair
Box 6841
Fort St. John, BC
V1J 4J1

Dear Garnet:

**Re: Request for PRAD Funding of Peace River Prospects Project by
PRASP's Communications Committee**

I am writing this letter of support for the PRASP Communications project.

My office appreciates the space in the Peace Prospects section of the Northern Horizon newspaper. This has proved very useful for announcing events and raising awareness of projects and issues tackled by the BC Grain Producers Association, the Peace Region Forage Association and the Peace River Forage Seed Association.

I believe that farmers find the center page format to be quick to find and easy to read.

I appreciate that PRASP has raised the profile of agriculture in daily papers such as the Peace River Block News and the Alaska Highway News by having a regular Agriculture page.

I appreciate the Agriculture editors (Kate O'Neil & Jim Sinclair) continuing the dialog with the newspaper editors to get associations and authors fairly acknowledged for their contributions and time.

It is important to have continuity and continued commitment in this project so people will continue to recognize and use it as a regular source of information. So many projects get started with great enthusiasm and then fizzle out. This project has continued and has become a staple in communicating with producers.

Yours sincerely,

Sandra Burton,
Cross Commodity Manager

PRASPS.

I would like to commend you for promoting agriculture through the media. The general public needs to be informed of the vital role played by farmers in our economy and our society.

The PROP Association requests that you continue to fund Brenda Birley's reporting of agricultural news. We have appreciated that Mrs Birley has done several pieces on organic agriculture. We believe it benefits the public to have more awareness of different approaches to agriculture.

Knowledge of organic agriculture can help people make better informed choices.

This form of public education benefits both producers and consumers.

Timothy Ewert

Dear Brenda

I hope this helps.



North Peace 4-H District Council

350-10003 110th Ave
Fort St. John, BC V1J 6M7

March 27, 2001

PRASP
C/o Kate O'Neil
PO Box 6843
Fort St. John BC V1J 4J3

Dear Ms. O'Neil,

The North Peace 4-H District Council would like to express its gratitude to your organization for the support and exposure you give to the 4-H program in the Peace River area. In the past your newspaper insert in the Northern Horizon and other local papers has given us a place to publish 4-H related news and advertise our various events and programs. This makes 4-H in BC better known and encourages those interested in the program to stay connected. As we try to encourage young people to get involved in agriculture and learn more about the industry, we are raising the next generation of farmers. In working together with PRASP we hope to amalgamate more aspects of our work with yours.

We wish you continued success with your endeavors and want to express our support for any funding application you may pursue to continue this important outlet for the farming community in the Peace River district.

Thank you for your continued support of the Peace River 4-H program.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Sigrid Tobler'.

Sigrid Tobler

Secretary