

SPECIAL AREAS BOARD



Report to the Ratepayer—Spring/Summer 2016

Message from the Chair

The keys to our success in the Special Areas are the people, communities and businesses who call the Special Areas home. We want to hear from you. Throughout the month of June, we are looking to meet with you at your annual Ratepayer Meetings to consider together some of the current challenges and future opportunities facing our area.

Our focus remains on delivering municipal services in a cost-effective and responsive manner while balancing complex economic realities. We are working to ensure we get the best value for monies spent, while continuing to support local people, communities, and businesses in these challenging times. Our commitment to maintaining stable municipal mill-rates through smart budget choices, completing infrastructure work in currently favorable conditions, and enabling sustainable communities is part of our region's plan for success.

Partnerships with our municipal and regional partners are developing innovative and proactive strategies for service delivery, economic development and land stewardship. Our four member Board, including the three elected Advisory Councillors, continues seeking out ways to enhance the viability of our communities and region. Our work with the Climate Change Strategy Taskforce is investigating the impacts of the provincial climate change strategy and looking for ways to generate opportunities for our area.

What makes the Special Areas Board unique, and how we can leverage our strengths to help our area thrive, is a conversation we want to have with you. We strongly encourage you, the ratepayer, to meet with us at your upcoming Ratepayer Meetings in June, to share your questions and concerns.

Best Regards,


Jordon Christianson, Chair

IN THIS EDITION

Municipal Services

- 2015 Highlights
- What's New in 2016
- 2016 Surfacing Projects—Map

Finance & Administration

- 2015 — Financial Year in Review
- 2016 Budget Highlights

Governance

- Meet the Board
- Advisory Council Information

Property & Land Administration

- Assessment By Year (2012-2016)
- Grasslands Range

For more information, go to www.specialareas.ab.ca or visit us on our Facebook page and Twitter @SpecialAreas.

Contact Us At:

Special Area 2 District Office (403) 854-5600 212-2nd Ave. W, Box 820, Hanna, AB T0J 1P0

Special Area 3 District Office (403) 664-3618 319, Main St., Box 30, Oyen, AB T0J 2J0

Special Area 4 District Office (403) 577-3523 4916-50th St. Box 220, Consort, AB T0C 1B0

2016 ANNUAL RATEPAYER MEETINGS

Annual ratepayer meetings are taking place throughout the Special Areas the month of June. Come join us to discuss the current issues and concerns facing you and your area.

Have your voice heard—join our conversation.

More information about the upcoming meetings, including meeting dates, times and location will be posted in local newspapers, media publications and online at www.specialareas.ab.ca.



MUNICIPAL SERVICES

2015 Highlights

Roads & Transportation Services

We completed more than 37.3 km of road construction, 13.5 km backtrail repairs, and 72 km of road soil/surface stabilization work.

On three digit highways major projects included: surfacing work on Hwy 886 (16 km); soil stabilization work on Hwy 862 (16 km), Hwy 561 (20.8 km), Hwy 876 (29 km); and construction work on Hwy 876 (24 km) and Hwy 586 (4.8 km). On our local roads major projects included: surfacing work on the Snake Trail (3 km), Fox Lake Trail (0.45 km), Twp. Road 37-0 (T&E Pumps); and repairs to Girletz Road.

Our ongoing focus on road maintenance and operator training continues to pay dividends on improvements to road surfaces.

Municipal Parks

Continuing to invest in our Municipal Parks, major projects were completed in 2015. Blood Indian Park had the splash park/playground area completed with the installation of a rubberized play surface, steel picnic table and bench. Damaged in the 2012 flood, shoreline restoration work was completed for 100 meters in the west, facilitating improved shoreline fishing and increasing valuable camping space.

Prairie Oasis Park saw the opening of the new camping loop area, complete with multi-function storm shelters/toilet units and irrigation system. The new loop was well used in the 2015 season.

Fire Protective Services

Supporting our volunteer fire departments with ongoing training, new infrastructure and equipment remained our focus. We were pleased to welcome Rob Palmer as Deputy Fire Chief for the Special Areas, increasing our capacity to support regional fire programs and volunteer fire departments. New capital investments included the addition of new trucks at Altario, Oyen and Consort with modern equipment tiered to Cessford and Buffalo. The Empress Fire Hall/Village Shop partnership building began construction, with completion scheduled for 2016.

The rollout of the Controlled Burn Notification System was very successful, with an average of 55 burn notifications completed monthly. The number of fire calls in 2015 was consistent with past years, a total of 190 calls—with 25% from motor vehicle accidents.

WHAT'S NEW FOR 2016 ?

WATER PROJECTS

- ◆ Rural Waterline to Hamlet of Monitor
 - ◆ Partnership Project with Shirley McClellan Regional Water Services Commission, funded by the Building

PARKS PROJECTS

- ◆ Prairie Oasis Park
 - ◆ Small Playground in New Camping Loop
 - ◆ Addition to West Shower Building
- ◆ Blood Indian Park
 - ◆ Shoreline Restoration Program
 - ◆ Electrical Upgrade for Future Development
 - ◆ East Access Road Upgrades

HAMLET PROJECTS

- ◆ Hamlet addressing program

FIRE PROJECTS

- ◆ Jenner Rapid Rescue Unit (*grant funding*)

ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

- ◆ 12.8 km—Hwy 876 (*Hwy 570 to Twp 25-0*)
- ◆ 9.6 km—Hwy 586 (*Hwy 36 to Twp 12-2*)
- ◆ 9.6 km—Hwy 872 (*RR 12-2 to Twp 33-4*)
- ◆ 16.5 km—Hwy 886 (*Twp 25-0 to RR 6-2*)
- ◆ 25.6 km—Hwy 862 (*Hwy 570 to Twp 29-4*)
- ◆ 12.8 km—Pollockville Road (*Hwy 36 to Berry Creek*)
- ◆ 14.3 km—Sedalia Road (*Hwy 886 to RR 5-1*)
- ◆ 12.0 km—Krause Road (*Hwy 555 to Twp 23-2*)
- ◆ 3.2 km—T&E Pumps Road (*RR 6-4 to RR 7-0*)

Water/Waste Water

Work on water stations was completed with continuing expansion of the remote monitoring and control systems throughout the network. The installation of cash card system was completed at 8 truck fill stations, with cards available for purchase at District Offices. We were pleased to welcome Wyatt Girletz as the Water Services Supervisor as Bob Kern is retiring from that role.

Enforcement Services

Protecting road infrastructure investments remains our primary focus, with the hiring of Officer Cody Rose—a local returning to the Special Areas. Officer Rose joins Officers Terry McMahon and John Armstrong in Enforcement Services.

FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

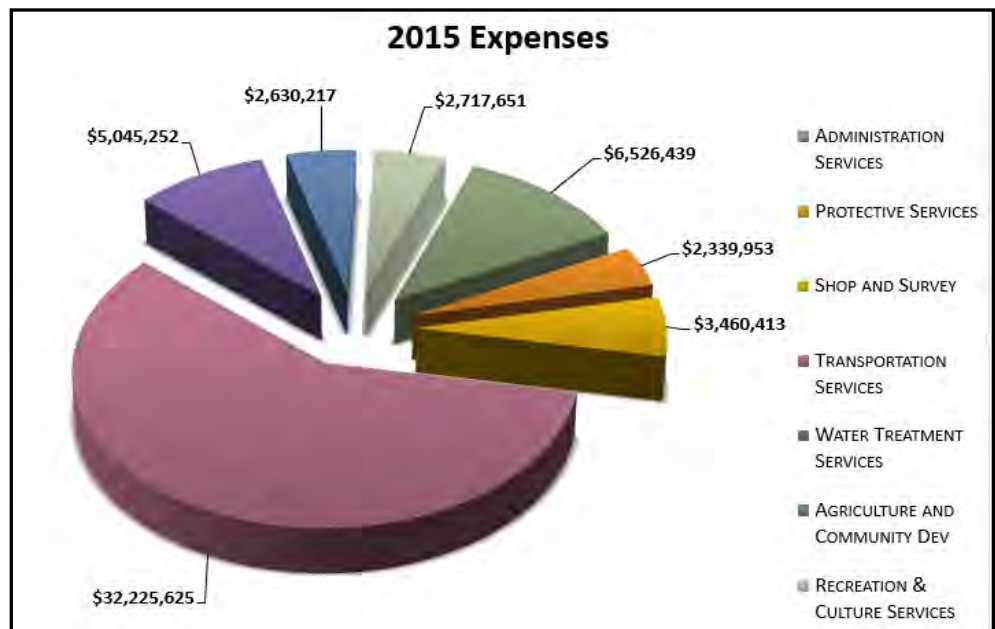
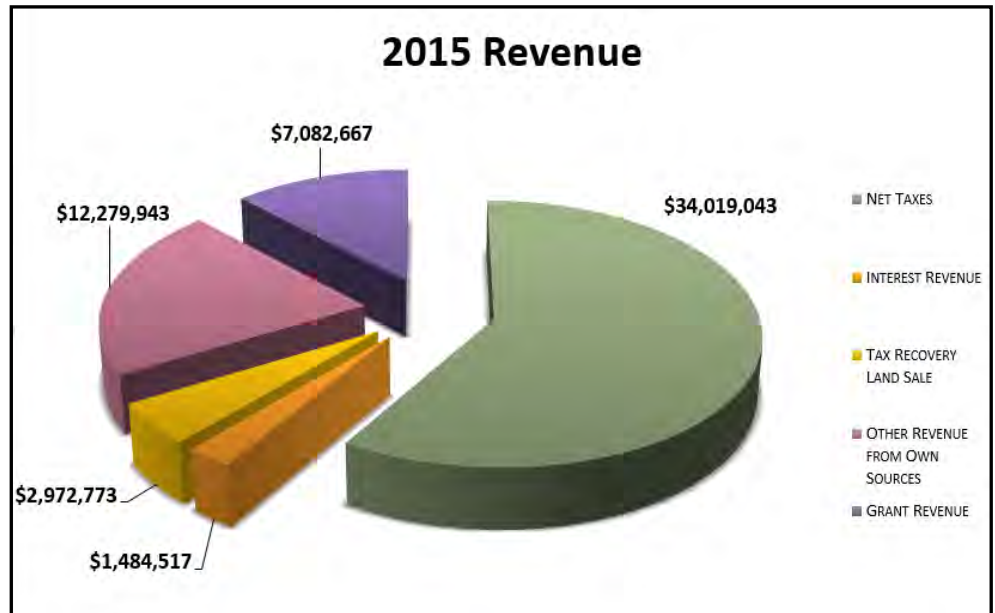
Year in Review—2015

The Special Areas Board is in a strong financial position with sufficient financial resources to fund future operational and capital requirements. The Board has accumulated unrestricted operational surplus available for funding future expenditures of \$14.1 million. As well, the Board has transferred the funds received from the Tax Recovery Land sales into a Reserve totaling \$53.9 million.

Total revenue increased in 2015 in part due to an increase in residential and non-residential (industrial) municipal mill rate.

Expenses in 2015 were lower due to deferring projects in Administration Services, Recreation and Cultural services areas. Expenditures in the Transportation area totaled \$35.5 million, with a small increase planned for 2016 (\$35.7 million). Other major work in 2015 included the continuation of the Environmental Impact Assessment for the Special Areas Water Supply Project (SAWSP), the completion of Bartman Dam construction work, as well as capital work on road infrastructure.

In 2015, the Board provided over \$1.0 million in funding to local recreational boards and over \$200,000 in economic development projects within local communities throughout the Special Areas.



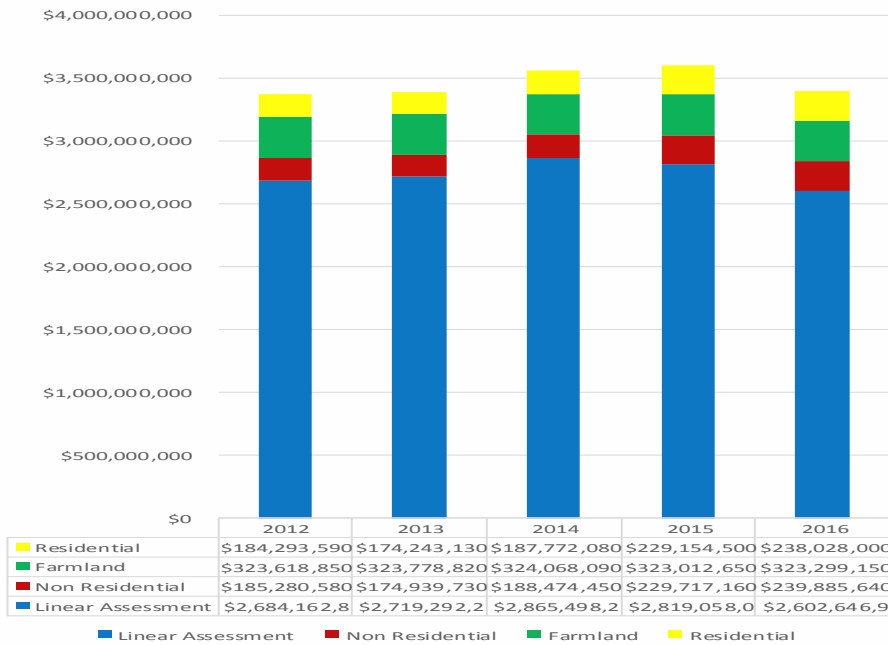
2016 Budget Highlights

	2016 Budget*	2015 Actual*
Total Revenue	\$ 58.2 million	\$ 57.8 million
Total Expenditures	\$ 60.8 million	\$ 55.5 million
Total (Deficit)	(\$ 2.6 million)	(\$ 0.5 million)
<i>*Calculated using a modified cash basis</i>		

A deficit of \$2.6 million is anticipated for 2016, representing an increase from the \$524,000 deficit in 2015.

- ♦ The deficit in 2016 will be funded out of the accumulated operational reserves of \$14.1 million.
- ♦ There is no increase to the municipal portion of the mill rate for 2016.

Assessment By Year - 2012 to 2016



2016 ASSESSMENT BULLETIN

Assessments of residential properties in the Special Areas have seen some minor fluctuations for 2015. Most properties are seeing a change in their assessed values of \$10,000 or less, translating to approx. of \$59.90 in property tax.

Anyone wishing to discuss their 2015 assessment is encouraged to contact the Assessment Department as soon as possible so any issues may be resolved prior to the appeal period ending on July 19, 2016.

Please contact the Assessment Department at
(403) 854-5632 or email at
SABassessment@specialareas.ab.ca

For further information related to assessments or the complaint process, or to access any forms for this process please visit us online at www.specialareas.ab.ca.

The Assessment and Taxation page is found under the "Living" tab on the Special Areas website.

PROPERTY ADMINISTRATION & LAND USE

RANGE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

Don't Wait to Manage Your Grasslands in a Drought

Drought is likely on the mind of ranchers in the Special Areas once again after the challenging conditions experienced for most of the 2015 growing season. Snow cover has been thin and scattered this winter which has not fully replenished soil moisture levels. Although it remains to be seen if we will experience similar moisture deficiencies in 2016, good range management calls us to always plan grazing activities to lessen the impacts of drought once it occurs.

Drought impacts on grasslands include reduced plant vigor, herbage yield, litter reserves and root growth. If pastures are not managed properly before and during drought, these impacts can be cumulative and cause long term effects on the production of the grasslands. Grazing opportunities of severely affected pastures in years following drought may become limited as the recovery period increases to rebuild the plant health and litter reserves. Properly managed pastures can be expected to recover faster and provide more grazing opportunity.

Some key range management principles should be used to keep the grasslands in healthy condition and lessen the negative impact of drought years.

- **Reduce your stocking levels to balance livestock needs with the forage supply.**

Reducing stocking levels retains litter by enabling plants to maintain their present level of vigour. Litter conserves soil water and increases production on grasslands. As litter is reduced, the soil temperature rises causing more evaporation and less moisture retention in the soil.

- **Rest or delay grazing on heavily grazed pastures from the previous grazing season.**

Graze first those fields that were rested or deferred in the previous grazing season. Use fence, water and salt locations to distribute livestock across the pasture to achieve proper utilization levels.

- **Provide effective rest to the forage following grazing.**

Continued grazing of drought affected range further magnifies drought impacts.

If already threatened by drought impacts, ranchers can employ some more drastic measures including extended feeding before cattle enter pastures, deep culling of livestock if prices are favorable to do so, early marketing of calves to reduce the grazing demand on pastures, grazing annual crops or renting additional pasture not affected by drought.

For more information on range management techniques, please contact our Rangeland Agrologist Nolan Ball at (403) 854-5647 or visit us online at www.specialareas.ab.ca. The Range Management resource page is located under Agriculture Services.

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Report to the Ratepayer—Spring/Summer 2016

MEET THE SPECIAL AREAS BOARD

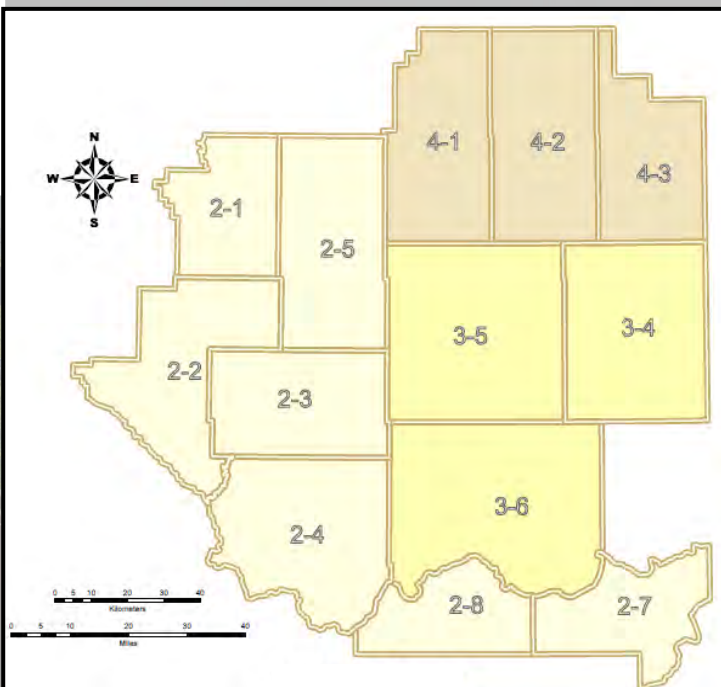
The Special Areas Board is comprised of four members—three Advisory Councillors and the Chair. The Board meets twice a month to make policy decisions; decides on subletting and subdivision requests; provides input and approval of annual budgets; reviews emerging issues and provides strategic direction; is advised on operational objectives; and provides recommendations to the Minister of Municipal Affairs on rates, land use amendments, and provincial Commission appointments. The Board has a reputation for sustainable and sound local decision making, ensuring competing needs in the area are balanced to support the region's long-term sustainability.

Currently, the Board's members include Brent Horner, Daryl Swenson, Bonnie Sansregret, and Jordon Christianson. Brent Horner was appointed to the Board in 2011 and has served as an Advisory Councillor since 1995. Daryl Swenson was appointed to the Board in 2014 and has served as an Advisory Councillor since 2007. Bonnie Sansregret was appointed to the Board in 2014 and has served as an Advisory Councillor since 2001. Jordon Christianson was appointed Chair of the Board in 2015 and has been employed with the Special Areas Board since 1999.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

The *Local Authorities Election Act* governs community government elections, including the election of Advisory Councillors in the Special Areas. It sets out eligibility criteria for voters and candidates, establishes the election calendar, sets out the election process, provides for recounts and judicial reviews, describes unlawful election activities, and describes the procedure for disposing of used ballots and other election materials. Members of the Advisory Council are elected for a four-year term, with Advisory Councillors able to serve for multiple terms if elected.

The Advisory Council meets quarterly with administrative staff to discuss current issues and communicate strategic direction for the Board. Other meetings Advisory Councillors attend include road committee, ratepayer meetings and various boards and committees which they represent the Special Areas on.



SA 2—SD 1	Bob Gainer	Gainer.bob@gmail.com
SA 2—SD 2	Neal Roes	Neal.roes@hotmail.com
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SA 2—SD 7	Daryl Swenson	dswenson@netago.ca
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SA 3—SD 4	Travis Foot	travis@bigskyrealestate.ca
SA 3—SD 5	Graham Caskey	gmcaskey@netago.ca
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SA 4—SD 2	Bonnie Sansregret	Bonjoe@netago.ca
SA 4—SD 3	Robert Worobo	rmworobo@netago.ca

Visit us at www.specialareas.ab.ca or find us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

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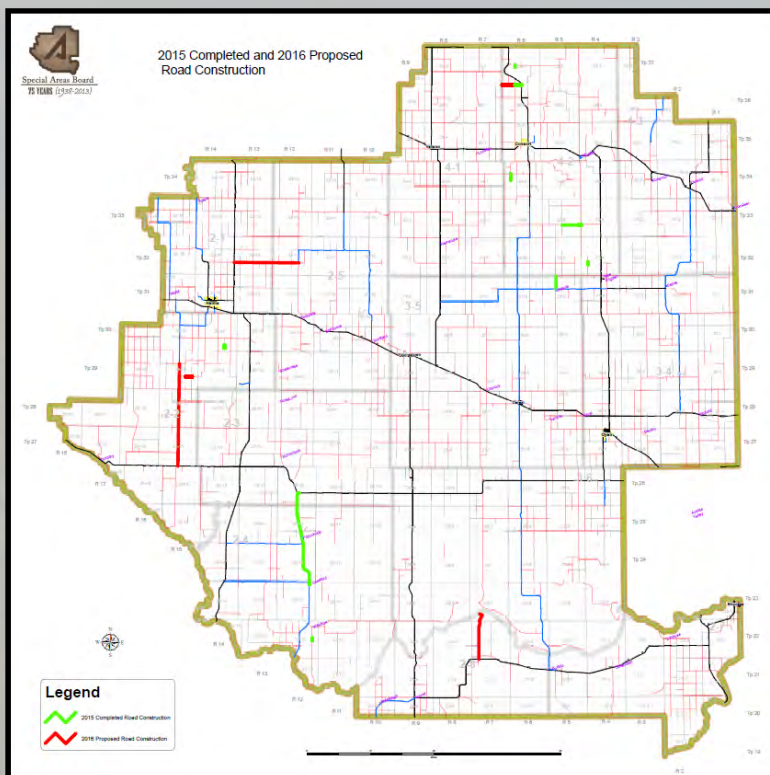
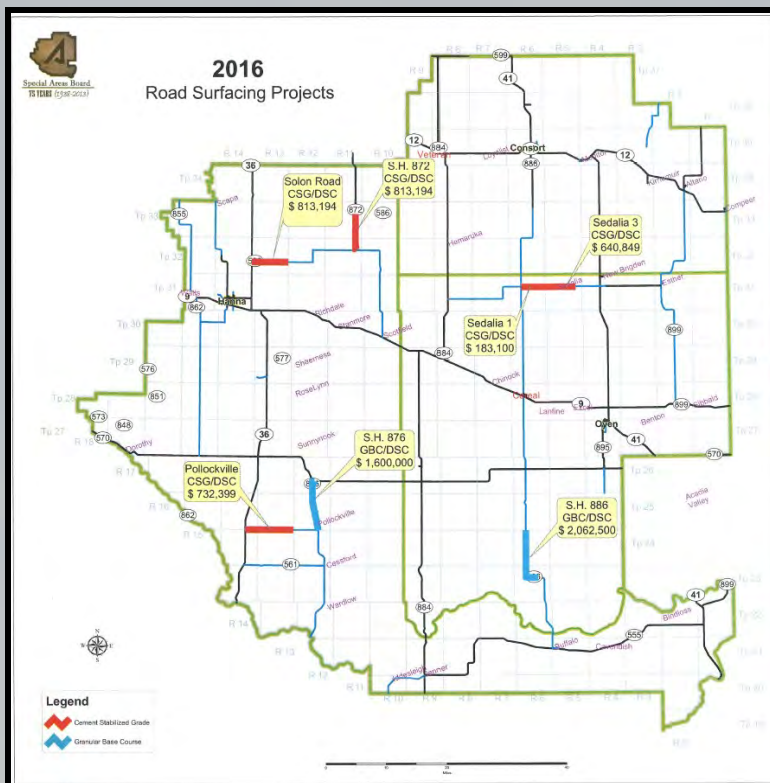
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*We want
YOUR view of
the Special
Areas!*

We are having a contest from May 1 to July 31 to see your great pictures of the Special Areas.

Email your pictures in and you could win a free weekend of lakeside camping at Prairie Oasis Park in 2017.

For more information, visit our website or find us on Facebook.



Want to stay up to date on current conditions and road maintenance activity?

Check out our SAB Map APP available at iTunes or www.sabmaps.com



Visit us at www.specialareas.ab.ca or find us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter