

# SPECIAL AREAS BOARD



Report to the Ratepayer—Spring/Summer 2017

## Message from the Chair

Connecting with you—our ratepayer—is a key part of our work at the Special Areas Board. Our ratepayer meetings are scheduled over the month of June all over the Special Areas, and we want to connect with you. We here at the Special Areas, the Board and your locally elected Advisory Council, look forward to these annual meetings as they allow us to meet together sharing stories and hearing concerns.

In 2017, the Board continues to work with our partners on addressing the impact of the Province's *Climate Leadership Plan* on our region. We met with the Coal Communities Advisory Panel, providing input on how to address our economic realities for this region throughout this transition period. We continue to make progress on the staged surfacing strategy on our road infrastructure, renewing our maintenance partnership with Alberta Transportation for another three years. Our innovative model allows for more kilometres of roads to be surfaced faster in a practical, cost-effective manner. Capitalizing on competitive industry prices, we have contracted Aecon Transportation West to pave 44 km of Highway 876 from the Red Deer River to Highway 570.

The outbreak of bovine tuberculosis this past fall reminded us all of the importance of community, showcasing the resiliency which has always defined the people of the Special Areas. We are working with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to address and remediate the impacted areas in the Buffalo-Atlee Community Pasture, providing updates when available. Biosecurity for producers in the Special Areas is critical to ensuring their long-term security and stability. Moving forward, the Board continues to advocate for increased and effective testing of the elk and wildlife populations in this region, specifically those in the Suffield Block.

The Board recognizes the ongoing economic challenges facing our province, and our region. Delivering municipal services in a cost-effective and responsive manner is critical, and we are always working to get the best value for our dollar. Maintaining balanced mill-rates, while ensuring stable funding to our municipal and community partners, allows the Board to support this region and our communities as safe and sustainable places for people to visit, work and live.

Municipal elections are taking place across Alberta on October 16<sup>th</sup>, if you are interested in becoming a locally elected Advisory Councillor I encourage you to look at the nomination information included in this report. I look forward to meeting with you this June, coming together to build on our past successes while meeting the challenges in our future together.

Warm Regards,

## IN THIS EDITION

### SPOTLIGHT ON COUNCIL

- The 2017 Election & You!

### PROPERTY & LAND ADMINISTRATION

- Assessment By Year (2013-2017)
- Orphan Well Info
- Carrying Capacity and Your Pasture

### FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

- 2016 — Financial Year in Review
- 2017 Budget Highlights

### MUNICIPAL SERVICES

- 2016 Highlights
- 2017 What's New
- 2017 Road Projects—Map

Photo Credit:  
Dena Miller

Taken at Blood Indian

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

## 2017 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.

Want to Chat?

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](http://www.specialareas.ab.ca).



# 2017 MUNICIPAL ELECTION—ADVISORY COUNCIL

On Monday October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017 people all across Alberta will go to the polls to elect representatives to their local municipal government.

**IN THE SPECIAL AREAS, 13 ADVISORY COUNCILLORS WILL BE ELECTED—1 FROM EACH SUBDIVISION.**

## **I WANT TO GET ELECTED AS AN ADVISORY COUNCILLOR. WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?**

Are you interested in becoming a candidate in the 2017 municipal election of the Advisory Council? You need to:

1. Make sure you are qualified to be a candidate (see below),
2. Pick up your *Prospective Candidate Package* from your local District Office (Hanna, Oyen, Consort) available by June,
3. Complete your nomination form correctly, ensuring you have 5 signatures of eligible electorates included,
4. **HAND DELIVER** your nomination form and documents to your local District Office **ON** Nomination Day (**September 18<sup>th</sup>**)

## **HOW DO I QUALIFY AS A CANDIDATE FOR THE UPCOMING MUNICIPAL ELECTION?**

To qualify as a Candidate, you must be:

- ◆ At least 18 years of age on Nomination Day (September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017); and
- ◆ A Canadian Citizen; and
- ◆ A resident in the local jurisdiction (the subdivision) for the 6 consecutive months immediately preceding Nomination Day.

The following will *disqualify* you as a Candidate:

- ◆ If you are the auditor of the municipality;
- ◆ **If your current property taxes are more than \$50 in arrears;**
- ◆ **If you are in default for any other debt to the municipality in excess of \$500 or more than 90 days; or**
- ◆ If within the previous 10 years you have been convicted of an offense under the *Local Authorities Election Act*, or the *Canada Elections Act*.

## **WHAT DOES AN ADVISORY COUNCILLOR DO?**

An Advisory Councillor is an elected official whose role is to confer with and advise the Special Areas Board and the Minister of Municipal Affairs on matters affecting the Special Areas.

**The main responsibility of an Advisory Councillor is to represent the interests of their constituents on the elected Advisory Council.**

For more information on the general duties of a locally elected official, please visit the Municipal Affairs information site on Municipal Elections at [http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/mc\\_elections](http://www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/mc_elections).



# 2017 MUNICIPAL ELECTION—ADVISORY COUNCIL

## How Does The Advisory Council Work With The Special Areas Board?

The role of the locally elected Advisory Council is to confer with and advise the Special Areas Board and the Minister of Municipal Affairs on matters affecting the Special Areas. In practice, the Advisory Council provides advice to and sets overall direction for the Special Areas Board through their quarterly meetings, resolutions and motions.

The Special Areas Board is comprised of 3 locally elected Advisory Councillors—1 from each Special Area—and an appointed Chair. The Advisory Council recommends 3 members (1 from each Special Area) of the Council be appointed to the Board for a term of 4 years. The Chair of the Special Areas Board is appointed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and acts in a role comparable to a Chief Administrative Officer.

## How Are Advisory Councillors Paid?

Advisory Councillors are paid remuneration and expenses for their work on the Special Areas Advisory Council and all other boards and committees they attend in their capacity as an Special Areas Advisory Councillor.

Currently, the rates are:

- ◆ Daily Rate (if over 8 hours) = \$257.00
- ◆ Daily Rate (if up to 8 hours) = \$169.00
- ◆ Expenses\* = \$.505/km & per diems
- ◆ \*Linked to current Govt of AB rates

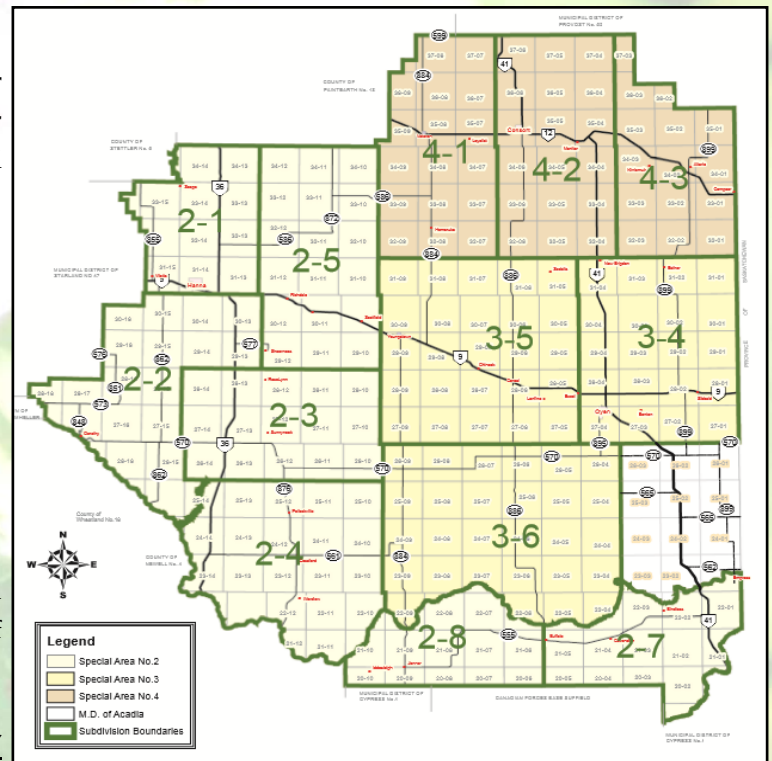
## How Long Is The Term Of Office?

The term for elected Advisory Councillors is 4 years as outlined in the *Local Authorities Election Act*. This term begins the date of the organizational meeting held following the general election.

## How Often Does The Advisory Council Meet?

The Advisory Council meets quarterly (March, June, September & December) to discuss emerging issues, provide reports on external committees, review policies and provide formal resolutions and recommendations to the Special Areas Board. The spring and fall meetings typically last two or three days, and have historically been held in Hanna, AB. Summer and winter meetings are one day, with locations throughout the Special Areas.

Advisory Councillors represent the Special Areas on other external committees and boards, and are compensated at the established remuneration rate. Advisory Councillors are required to attend the annual Road Committee and Ratepayer Meetings for their subdivision, and to sit on the Tax Recovery Land Sale Grievance Committee (if required). Representation by Advisory Councillors onto external boards and committees is decided at the organizational meeting held following the municipal election.



# RANGE MANAGEMENT

## Do You Know the Carrying Capacity of Your Pastures ?

One of the most important principles of range and pasture management is to understand the productivity potential of the land you are placing livestock on and being able to apply a sustainable stocking rate that matches the carrying capacity of your land.

Carrying capacities vary across the Special Areas depending on climate, soils, types of vegetation and other factors. The carrying capacity for grazing leases are identified in the annual lease rentals sent out for each grazing lease. Understanding the carrying capacity of your lease is critical to best using your grazing lease by balancing the stocking rate with the available forage supply. The stocking rate is the number of animals, adjusted for class of livestock and size, multiplied by a set amount of time, that graze a specific area. It is usually expressed in animal unit months (AUMs) per acre.

### Want to learn more? Here is an example to understand proper stocking rates of a pasture:

A rancher has a two section pasture consisting of 1280 acres that he wants to graze from June 15 to October 15 with cow/calf pairs. The carrying capacity that has been determined for the grazing lease is 40 acres/animal unit. He estimates the weight of his cows to be around 1400 lbs.

*How many of these cow/calf pairs can the rancher sustainably put on the pasture?*

$$\frac{1280 \text{ acres}}{40 \text{ acres/AU}} = 32 \text{ animal units/year}$$

1. The first step is to determine how many animal units are available in the pasture. This can be calculated by taking the entire area and dividing it by the area required to run a 1000 lb animal for a year.

This tells us we can stock 32—1000 lb animals on the pasture for 1 year.

2. Next we need to need to calculate how many animal unit months the 32 animal units represent.

$$32 \text{ animal units} \times 12 \text{ months/year} = 384 \text{ animal unit months}$$

Now we have determined that there are 384 AUMs available in the pasture.

$$\frac{384 \text{ animal unit months}}{4 \text{ months (Jun 15—Oct 15)}} = 96 \text{ animal units}$$

$$\frac{96 \text{ animal units}}{1.4 \text{ animal unit equivalent}} = 69 \text{ cow/calf pairs}$$

3. Next we can now use the grazing period length and animal size to determine how many cow/calf pairs can be put into the pasture.

So what do all these calculations mean?

Based on correct carrying capacity for this two section pastures, ***the rancher can put 69 cow/calf pairs on the pasture for the grazing season of June 15-October 15.***

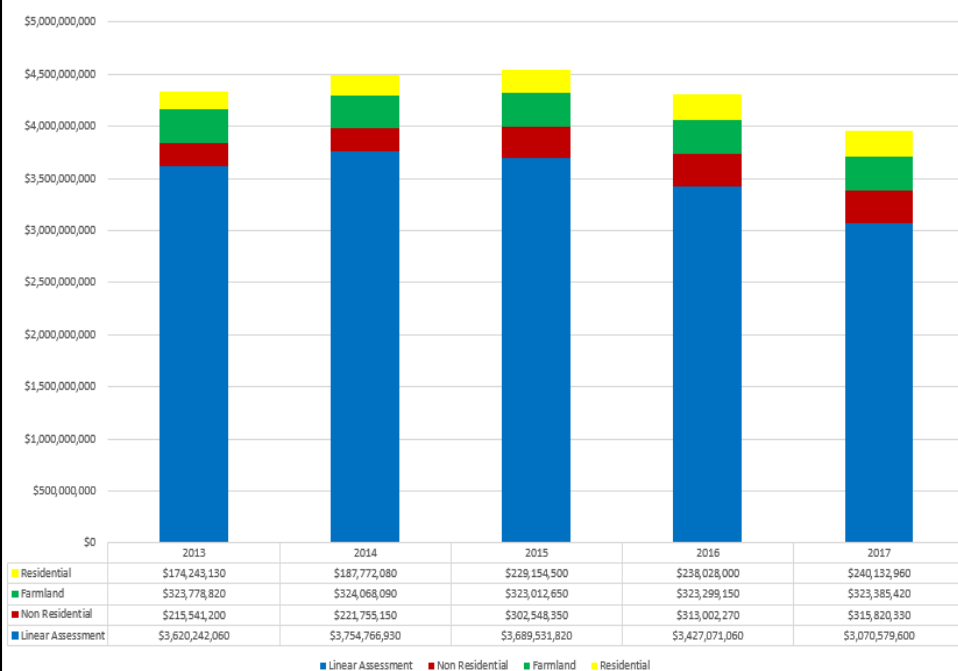
By applying the proper stocking rate to this pasture, there is adequate carryover to protect the plants and soil, build organic matter and provide for effective water cycle functioning.

If you would like more information on carrying capacity calculations and effective range management, please contact our local Special Areas Agrologist Nolan Ball at [Nolan.ball@specialareas.ab.ca](mailto:Nolan.ball@specialareas.ab.ca) or at (403)854-5647.



# PROPERTY ADMINISTRATION

Assessment By Year - 2013 to 2017



## 2017 ASSESSMENT BULLETIN

Assessments of residential properties in the Special Areas have seen some minor fluctuations for 2016. Most properties are seeing minor changes in their assessed values.

Anyone wishing to discuss their 2016 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 21, 2017.

Please contact the Assessment Department at (403) 854-5632 or email at [SABassessment@specialareas.ab.ca](mailto: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](http://www.specialareas.ab.ca).

## Do You Have 'Orphan' Wells on Your Land?

The Orphan Well Association ([www.orphanwell.ca](http://www.orphanwell.ca)) defines an orphan well as "a well, pipeline, facility or associated site which has been investigated and confirmed as not having a legally responsible or financially able party to deal with its abandonment and reclamation".

### • Who operates the Orphan Well Association?

The Orphan Well Association (OWA) is a not-for-profit organization which operates under the direction of its Members (including the industry associations, CAPP, EPAC, AER and AEP). Industry funds the majority of the costs incurred by the OWA, mostly through an Orphan Fund Levy. The Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) is the single regulator of energy development in Alberta, and assesses and collects a levy amount based on the abandonment and reclamation liabilities held by each company and then remits the funds to the OWA.

### • What does the Orphan Well Association do?

The mandate of the OWA is to manage the abandonment of Alberta upstream oil and gas orphan wells, pipelines, facilities and the reclamation of their associated orphaned sites.

### • I think there is an orphan well on my land. What do I need to do as a first step?

If you have questions or concerns about possible orphans, please contact the AER Customer Contact Center at 1-855-297-8311. The AER's process is to investigate possible orphan wells for responsible parties before designating properties as orphans. You will need to have a copy of the Consent of Occupant for the impacted orphaned site to complete any application with AER.

### • I haven't received a rental payment for the oil & gas leases on my land. Who should I call?

The Alberta Surface Rights Board (SRB) is mandated to resolve disputes about compensation for surface access. They can be contacted at 780-427-2444 or via email at [srb.lcb@gov.ab.ca](mailto:srb.lcb@gov.ab.ca). It is a quasi-judicial tribunal which grants rights of entry and assists landowners/occupants and operators resolve disputes about compensation when operators require access to private land or occupied crown land to develop subsurface resources such as oil, gas, and coal or to build and operate pipelines and power transmission lines. The SRB reports to the Minister of Environment & Parks, which operates independently from the Ministry.

For more information on orphan wells or other oil and gas development, contact our Property Administration department at (403) 854-5600 or visit us online at [www.specialareas.ab.ca](http://www.specialareas.ab.ca).

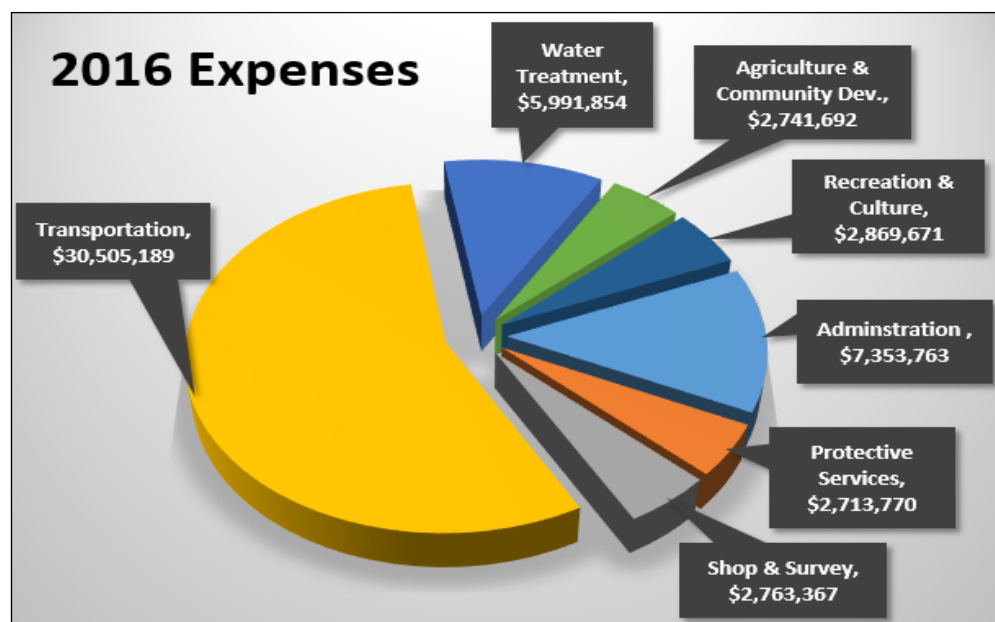
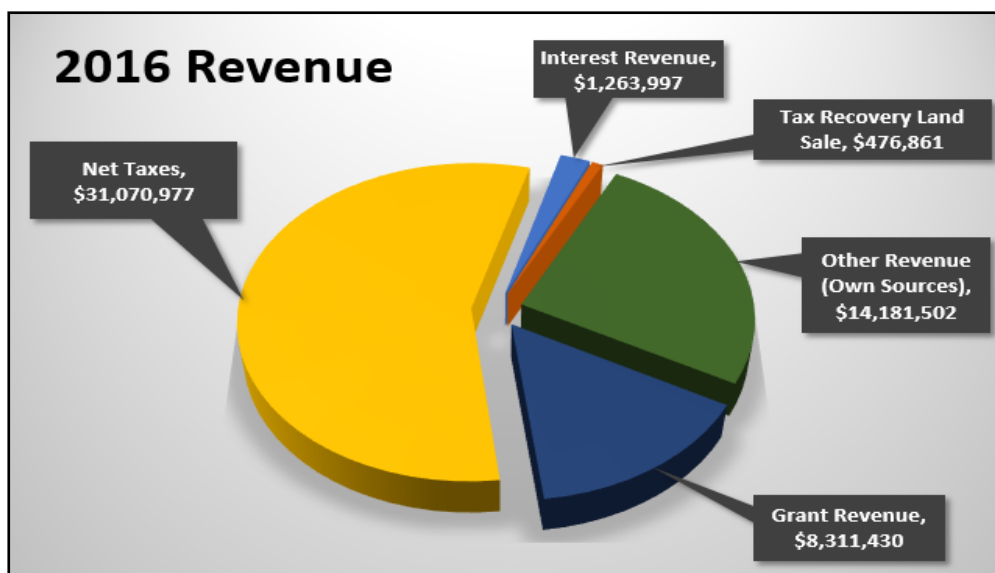
# FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

## Year in Review— 2016

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 \$13.5 million. As well, the Board has transferred the funds received from the Tax Recovery Land sales into a Reserve totaling \$54.4 million. Total revenue decreased in 2016 in part due to an decrease in overall assessment, and the Board is dealing with bad debts from the Oil & Gas industry.

The Board continued to focus on lowering expenses in 2016, with projects deferred throughout our operations. Despite these deferrals, some major projects delivered in 2016 included: the regional waterline extension from Monitor to Pemukan, the Hanna Medical Clinic renovation (in partnership with Starland County and Town of Hanna), the Hanna Admin building addition & renovation and significant capital work on road infrastructure.

In 2016, the Board supported our local communities and ratepayers through sustained funding to local recreational boards and economic development projects throughout the Special Areas.



## 2017 Budget Highlights

	2017 Budget*	2016 Actual*
Total Revenue	\$ 53.7 million	\$ 55.3 million
Total Expenditures	\$ 59.7 million	\$ 55.5 million
Total (Deficit)	(\$ 6.0 million)	(\$ 0.2 million)
*Calculated using a modified cash basis		

A deficit of \$6.0 million is anticipated for 2017, representing an increase from 2016 deficit .

- ♦ The deficit in 2017 will be funded out of the accumulated operational reserves of \$13.5 million.
- ♦ The Board is proceeding with a 43.9 km paving project on Highway 876, capitalizing on very competitive tender pricing to deliver this major project in 2017.

# WHAT'S NEW FOR 2017?

## WATER PROJECTS

- ♦ Hamlet of Wardlow—new truckfill/water plant
- ♦ Hamlet of Chinook—water plant realignment

## PARKS PROJECTS

- ♦ Prairie Oasis Park
  - ♦ Small Playground in New Camping Loop
  - ♦ Addition to West Shower House
- ♦ Blood Indian Park
  - ♦ Cold Storage Building
  - ♦ Docks & pilings - West Shoreline
  - ♦ Realignment of East Entrance Road
  - ♦ New Trailer Dump Station

## FIRE PROJECTS

- ♦ Reconfiguring Hwy 12 Communications System

## ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

- ♦ Three-Digit Highways
  - ♦ Hwy 586 (RR 12-3 to RR 13-0) - Construction
  - ♦ Hwy 586 (Hwy 872 to RR 12-2) - Construction
  - ♦ Hwy 586 (RR 13-0 to Hwy 36) - Surfacing
  - ♦ Hwy 862 (Twp 29-4 to Twp 28-2) - Surfacing
  - ♦ Hwy 855 (Hwy 9 to Twp 32-5) - Surfacing
  - ♦ Hwy 886 (Hwy 9 to Twp 30-2) - Surfacing
  - ♦ Hwy 876 (Red Deer River to Hwy 570) - Paving
- ♦ Local Roads
  - ♦ Girtetz Rd (Hwy 884 to Hwy 886) - Surfacing
  - ♦ Sedalia Rd (Hwy 41 to RR 5-1) - Surfacing
  - ♦ Pioneer Elevator Rd (Hwy 41 to 1 mile east) - Surfacing

## Municipal Parks

Our Municipal Parks provided family-friendly recreation for our communities while supporting tourism in our region. Prairie Oasis Park saw the new loop tree planting work completed and the installation of the new storm shelter/washroom complex.

Out at Blood Indian Park, 8 new serviced sites were installed with a 600 amp electrical upgrade to the park, new toilets were installed, new steel framed picnic tables replaced broken ones, and 200m of capped steel pile retaining wall was installed along the west shoreline, completing this project. Our support for surrounding communities continues with the upgrading of restroom facilities at rest areas near New Brigden & Dorothy, and at Jenner and Buffalo river campgrounds.



# MUNICIPAL SERVICES

## 2016 Highlights

### Roads & Transportation Services

We completed more than 37 km of road construction, 18 km backtrail repairs, and 80 km of road soil/surface stabilization work.

On three digit highways major projects included: surfacing on Hwy 872 (9.6 km); soil stabilization work on Hwy 876 (12.8 km), Highway 586 (9.6 km), Hwy 886 (16.5 km); and construction work on Hwy 862 (25.6 km). On our local roads major projects included: surfacing work on Pollockville Road (12.8 km) and Sedalia Road (15.1 km).

Our ongoing focus on road maintenance and operator training continues, with an internal training program in development.

### Water/Waste Water

The regional waterline extension from Monitor to Pemukan was completed, including the upgrades to the Monitor Water Building. A partnership project with SMRWSC, this work was funded through a Building Canada Fund grant. We continue to upgrade water infrastructure throughout our hamlets and systems in line with our infrastructure plan.

### Fire Protective Services

The Board's Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief supported our local firefighters through regional training and fire programs. The dedication of the volunteer firefighters, their families and employers enabled the high level of service delivered by our volunteer departments. The Board focused on ensuring our volunteer fire departments were equipped to meet their needs, using grant funding and partnerships with local municipalities and volunteer groups.

The Board continued to leverage our inter-municipal partnerships to access substantial grant funding in support of these investments. In 2016, these projects included: a Pumper Unit in Acadia Valley, a Rescue Unit in Veteran, a Rapid Response Unit in Jenner, and the construction of new bays at the Oyen Fire Hall.

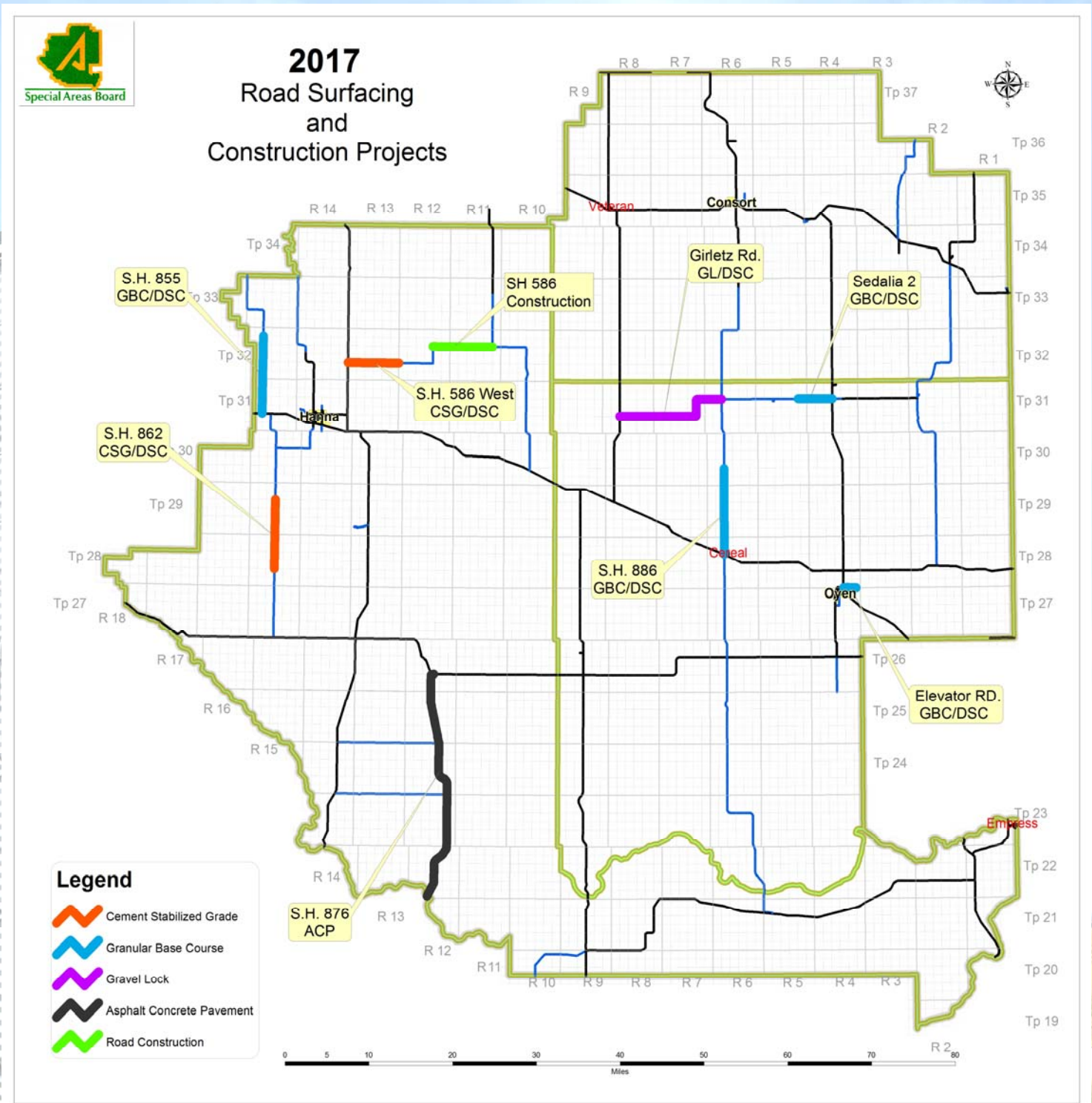
The Controlled Burn Notification System continued to be a valuable tool, with ratepayers completing over 300 burn notifications in 2016. The number of fire calls was lower this year, potentially due to the unusually wet and cool weather conditions. In 2016, our volunteer fire departments responded to a total of 119 calls, although the total insurable losses were comparable to previous years.



# SPECIAL AREAS BOARD



Report to the Ratepayer—Spring/Summer 2017



Visit us at [www.specialareas.ab.ca](http://www.specialareas.ab.ca) or find us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter