



REGIONAL IRRIGATION OPEN HOUSES

Public Engagement – What We Heard

BACKGROUND

The Special Areas Board and the MD of Acadia partnered with the Canada Infrastructure Bank and Alberta Agriculture & Forestry to investigate the feasibility of developing irrigation in east-central Alberta. This work will help project partners better understand what technically and financially feasible irrigation could look like in our region.

The report on the feasibility study work is expected late 2021.

WHAT WE DID

Special Areas and the MD of Acadia hosted open houses on October 6, 2021, in Pollockville and Acadia Valley. Representatives from the Special Areas Board, MD of Acadia, WaterSMART Solutions, Alberta Irrigation Districts Association, and McMillan LLP were on hand to answer questions about the feasibility project, water availability, irrigation development, and governance options for irrigation projects. Public health restrictions in effect were followed including mandatory masking and reduced capacity limits.

Over 75 people attended, including local producers, area residents, irrigation groups, and elected officials. Over 80% of attendees signed up for future project updates and communications.

WHAT WE HEARD

Although formal feedback was not requested, some themes did emerge in comments shared by attendees. This feedback is important to us and has been shared with project partners.

- *Irrigation is a game changer for the region and for producers.*
- *A secure and predictable supply of water should be a top priority for the region.*
- *Operational and capital costs will determine if irrigation is even possible, and if producers can afford to participate.*
- *Developing irrigation in the region would have transformative, generational impacts. All levels of government should be investing in it as the benefits from irrigation are realized on local, provincial, and federal levels - not just by irrigators.*
- *Local representation from producers is very important to make sure any potential irrigation development is planned, designed, and governed effectively.*
- *Local engagement is critically important for any potential irrigation development to move forward, especially with local producers and potential irrigators.*
- *This is about so much more than just building pivots and irrigating acres, information on the benefits of irrigation for the whole region needs to be communicated.*
- *Value-added agriculture and other tertiary benefits need to be highlighted.*

WHAT COMES NEXT

The report on the regional irrigation feasibility study is expected late 2021. This report is expected to help project partners make decisions on future project development and funding opportunities.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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