

TERMS OF REFERENCE LAND WORKING GROUP (LWG)

Updated by LWG: March 12, 2012
Approved by CEMA Board: March 28, 2012

PURPOSE:

The LWG is a technical working group that will develop tools, products and recommendations based on sound science and traditional knowledge to protect, sustain and reclaim the health of ecosystems, landscapes, watersheds, biodiversity and their individual components, including soil, landforms, vegetation, fish and wildlife, while balancing industrial development, social and environmental considerations within the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) and adjacent areas.

CONTEXT:

The LWG will address land, ecosystem and biodiversity (hereafter collectively referenced as 'land') related issues by developing tools, products and recommendations, as requested or approved by the Cumulative Environmental Management Association (CEMA) Board, that are inclusive of the variety of land uses present in the RMWB and adjacent areas. Prior to the formation of the LWG, a series of such products were developed by the Sustainable Ecosystems Working Group (SEWG), but for a narrowly defined scope (i.e., the Terrestrial Ecosystem Management Framework). This LWG will absorb the previous high-level working group role of SEWG, while SEWG will assume the role of a single-function subgroup under the LWG.

The LWG will adopt work-in-progress initiated or recommended by SEWG, and also initiate new work as required. In developing its work plan, and implementing various components thereof, the LWG will formally collaborate with other CEMA working groups, in particular the Reclamation Working Group, to avoid redundancy or duplication, and to identify synergies between the two working groups. In addition, recognizing that land and biodiversity management is inherently a multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency issue, the LWG will formally interface with other agencies or groups that are developing or leading land, ecosystem or biodiversity management initiatives.

The LWG will identify and track current and emerging land-related issues in the RMWB and adjacent areas. In addition, where it is determined by the CEMA Board that there is a need to recommend changes or action on land management issues, the LWG shall assemble and develop knowledge on these issues and make appropriate recommendations. Work of the LWG will be undertaken within the context of federal and provincial legislation, regulation and policy, and may recommend changes to legislation, regulation or policy.

OBJECTIVES:

The primary goal of the LWG will be to develop tools, products and recommendations that help to describe baseline conditions and cumulative land impacts. In order to meet this overarching goal, a number of objectives are identified, including the development of tools, products and recommendations for:

- 1) informing biodiversity- and land-based components of the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP)
- 2) building regional ecological base information for the RMWB and adjacent areas
- 3) measuring, monitoring and updating human use and reclamation activities in the RMWB and adjacent areas
- 4) implementing Integrated Land Management (ILM) principles across the RMWB and adjacent areas
- 5) selecting, measuring and monitoring appropriate ecological and land use indicators across the RMWB and adjacent areas

- 6) applying landscape evaluation and assessment models to the RMWB and adjacent areas
- 7) predicting and measuring reclamation effectiveness within the RMWB and adjacent areas

OPERATING GUIDELINES:

- The focus of the LWG work may include, but is not limited to, expert judgment of members, concerns expressed by regional stakeholders, future development forecasts, ecological and cumulative effects monitoring/modeling, research and studies conducted in the region, and observed regional effects potentially related to land development.
- The LWG may commission scientific or Traditional Knowledge studies to gain a better understanding of cumulative effects issues where this is required for the development of management recommendations.
- The views of all LWG members will be heard and considered.
- The LWG will strive to make consensus-based decisions on management recommendations while adhering to the CEMA Decision Making Policy.
- The LWG will operate in a manner consistent with all CEMA policies, procedures and guidelines. This includes operating within the bounds of CEMA-approved terms, work plans and budgets.
- LWG annual work plans and budgets will be submitted to CEMA in a timely manner for approval.
- The LWG will strive to communicate its work via regular engagement with other CEMA working groups, updates to the CEMA Board and Aboriginal Coordinating Committee and external communications efforts led by the CEMA Communications Director.
- The LWG will strive to maintain meaningful Aboriginal participation within the Group. As per the Traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) Guidelines and CEMA's mission and goals to ensure respectful and inclusive dialogue while providing a forum conducive to Aboriginal involvement and participation, the LWG will also strive to work with the TEK Advisory Committee and the Aboriginal Coordinating Committee to ensure TEK is meaningfully included in the LWG and its projects. Quarterly updates to the committees, as well as regular dialogue between Program Administrators, will be the main interface.
- LWG Chairpersons will be selected by the LWG in accordance with CEMA guidelines. Chairpersons are responsible for effective and efficient operation of the working group in a manner consistent with CEMA guidelines and policies, for timely submission of work plans and budgets for approval by CEMA, and for reporting working group progress to the CEMA Board.

REPORTING:

- The LWG will develop its inaugural work plan in March 2012, based on:
 - budget considerations, as approved by the CEMA Board
 - assessment of other related land-management initiatives relevant to the Region, especially those affiliated with the LARP
 - assessment of previous recommendations and land-related data gaps from CEMA and Government agencies
 - formal discussion with CEMA's Reclamation and Surface Water Working Groups

Once completed, the work plan will be reviewed and updated annually.

- Annual work plans, key product delivery dates, and key deliverables for LWG recommendations will be submitted to CEMA, consistent with CEMA procedures, policies and guidelines.
- The LWG Terms of Reference will be reviewed and updated periodically, as deemed appropriate by the LWG.

MEMBERSHIP:

- Any CEMA member is eligible to become a member of the LWG.
- Other interested stakeholders may request and be granted non-voting membership by the working group.
- The working group will strive to maintain broad stakeholder representation.
- The working group may appoint task groups to provide recommendations to the working group on specific, defined matters, generally of a technical nature. Task groups report to the LWG and can consist of members of the working group and external technical experts invited to participate in the task group.