2013 SARM Annual Programs Report

RM Strychnine Purchase Program

SARM staff and Board met with the Pesticide Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) in 2013 and continued to stress the importance of having this product available until a proven alternative is found.

In 2013 PMRA and Saskatchewan Agriculture conducted spot audits of RM offices selling and landowners using the product and they were generally content with the findings of those audits.

The registration of 2% liquid strychnine remained permanently registered for use in Saskatchewan throughout 2013. This registration continues to ensure that RMs and landowners will have access to this product in the future and until an effective, economic, and environmentally favourable alternative is found.

Irrigation Structures Program

In the Provincial Budget in 2013 SARM was allocated $1 million by the Ministry of Agriculture to administer a new program to help fund the repair and replacement of irrigation bridges and structures in the Province. SARM worked with the Ministry to design and deliver a program in 2013 and working out the administration agreement and program parameters took until June 28th which was very late in the year.

The program ended up being a cost shared program where the RM/Irrigation District would pay 65% and the Province would provide the other 35%.

There were very few applications for this program in 2013 and the only successful applicant that received approval withdrew it because when the cost estimate for the repairs came back they were above that which the RM and Irrigation District could afford.

SARM hosted a meeting in November 2013 of RMs that had structures that would have qualified for the program to see why they choose not to apply. All those in attendance agreed that the program would be welcome in future years but that the main reasons there was no uptake on the program in 2013 were as follows:

- The program was released too late in the year (June 28th) for RMs and Irrigation Districts to properly budget for such repairs/replacements.
- In 2013 the program offered to provide 65% of the costs for the required repair and replacement leaving the RM/Irrigation District to provide the other 35%.
- Those RMs present at the meeting didn’t think this was an affordable cost share and would like to see future years of programing support a cost share of 90/10.
- It was also suggested by all present that more money be allocated to the program in future years.
• It was also agreed that RMs continued to be concerned that if they became a participant in the program and funded the necessary repairs that they would become the official owner of the irrigation structure. This would have deterred some applicants.

SARM provided this feedback to the Minister in 2013 and our ask for this program in our 2014 would be that funding be continued into 2014 and that the criteria of the program change to meet RMs suggestions outlined above.

**Provincial Rat Eradication Program (PREP)**

SARM has been administering the Provincial Rat Eradication Program (PREP) on behalf of the Province of Saskatchewan since 2010. The purpose of the program is to promote uniformity and consistency in rat control methods across the province through communication and educational initiatives.

In 2013 the program received $1 million that was jointly funded through the provincial Agriculture Fieldworker Policy and the federal Growing Forward II initiative. A total of 271 RMs applied for funding as of December 31, 2013 and were paid an average grant of $2,581.

SARM asked that funding for this valuable program be continued into 2014 and that the Province consider providing funding on a 2 year basis instead of annually as is currently budgeted. The assurance of continued/future funding would encourage more RMs to implement control programs as they would know that their control efforts would be cost-shared beyond one year. We also asked the Province to increase program funding to $1.48 million as this would result in the Province and RMs providing an equal share of the current RM rat control budget.

**Beaver Control Program (BCP)**

The purpose of the Beaver Control Program is to provide financial assistance to rural municipalities (RMs) and First Nations Bands (FNBs), south of the Northern Administrative District, to control the beaver population in their respective jurisdictions. The BCP began in 2011 with SARM administering Provincial funds. Funding for the 2013/14 program in the amount of $500,000 is provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Federal government under Growing Forward.

In 2013, the program provided cost shared payments to RMs and First Nations bands that apply, paying $15 per adult beaver removed between March 1, 2013 and February 29, 2014. The program requires municipalities/bands to match this grant amount, at minimum, making the compensation provided to the designated individual a minimum of $30 for the removal of each problem beaver.

In 2013/14, SARM received 140 applications from 133 RMs and 7 First Nation Bands, the highest intake since the program began in 2011. Efforts have been made to target areas with high beaver populations by increasing the maximum claim eligibility in certain areas. At February 28, 2014, claims of $228,355 have been paid out to 87 of the 140 applicants with a total 20,441 problem beavers being removed.
SARM has asked that funding for the BCP be continued and provided for a 2 year period to allow an opportunity to effectively build on efforts to target those problem beaver areas and ensure that problem beaver populations are brought under control.

**Invasive Plant Control Program (IPCP)**

New in 2013, the Invasive Plant Control Program assists rural municipalities (RMs), First Nations Bands (FNBs), agriculture producers and other stakeholders with chemical costs to control persistent and problematic invasive plants. These plants include all weeds designated as Prohibited Weeds under *The Weed Control Act* including Leafy Spurge, Russian Knapweed, Common Tansy, and Yellow Toadflax. The program provides financial assistance for the cost of applied chemical of up to 100 per cent on public lands and 50 per cent on private lands.

Funding for the program is provided by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture and the Federal Government under Growing Forward 2, in the amount of $800,000 with SARM administering the Invasive Plant Control Program on their behalf.

With a late start to the program in October 2013, we saw a total of 51 applicants submitting funding requests of over $2221,900. Of those requests payments of $171,195 have been approved to be paid out as of the end of February 2014. At the time of the annual report a summary of final rebates wasn’t available to be included.

Moving forward, SARM is asking for continued funding for the Invasive Plant Control Program in an effort to encourage RMs, FNBs and other stakeholders to adopt an Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) that recognizes that finding invasive weeds known to be troublesome while they are in low numbers and treating these aggressively provides the greatest benefit to all municipalities in our province.

**Invasive Plant Management Program**

In 2013 SARM received funding from the Ministry of Agriculture to again contract the services of Harvey Anderson, Invasive Weed Specialist, to deliver the Invasive Alien Plant Management Program. The Invasive Alien Plant program provided advice to rural municipalities on integrated invasive weed management. This information was communicated through articles in the Rural Councillor magazine published by Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities as well as in person meetings with municipalities and presentations at the annual Weed Inspector Training Clinics organized by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture in 2013.

The goals of the program are to raise awareness of the threat that invasive plants pose to municipalities and their residents, provide municipalities with information on integrated management strategies for invasive plants, support municipalities with the adoption of biological control through monitoring and assistance with distribution, promote the development of long-term invasive plant management plans by municipalities, and promote the pooling of municipal resources to manage invasive plants through models such as Cooperative Weed Management Areas and/or AEGP Groups, to gain efficiencies and attract additional funding.

Harvey undertook 10 presentations for large groups including weed inspector clinics, undertook biological control at 13 sites across the province and consulted personally with 10 RMs. He also
contributed articles to SARM’s Rural Councillor Magazine and to the Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists newsletter and drafted weed factsheets for the Saskatchewan Forage Council. He also participated on weed tours and investigated any reports of invasive plants that were reported.

Wild Boar Program

SARM continues to administer the Feral Wild Boar Program on behalf of the Provincial Ministry of Agriculture. Funding has been focused on the targeted hunting of feral wild boar by two teams of hunters. However, there continues to be challenges in this area, including weather, geography and public apathy. The Feral Wild Boar Stakeholder Group has identified the need for additional education and public awareness, as well as research, and have identified possible projects to help in these areas. A survey of rural municipalities was completed to help better determine the magnitude of the problem in the province.

Municipal Roads for the Economy Program (MREP)

The following is a summary of the MREP for the 2013-14 program year.

**Heavy Haul High Volume Roads**
- 13 projects approved
- Total kilometers: 84.1
- Total costs: $21,060,430
- Total grants: $6,920,500

**CTP Construction Upgrades**
- 15 projects approved
- Total kilometers: 85.9
- Total costs: $8,926,520
- Total grants: $4,374,820

**Clearing The Path Corridor Incremental Maintenance Funding**
- Total of 6416 kms of designated corridor in the province
- $7,057,600 in annual incremental maintenance payments at $1100 per kilometer
- An additional 105.64 km further approved in Jan 2014 ($116,204)

**2014-15 MREP APPLICATION INTAKE**
The application deadline for Heavy Haul High Volume Roads and Clearing the Path Construction projects for 2014-15 was November 29, 2013.

**Heavy Haul High Volume Roads**
- 58 Applications, an increase from 53 applications in 2013-14
- 399.5 kms, an increase of 111.5 kms from 2013-14
- Estimated Construction Costs: $70,980,052.10

**CTP Construction Upgrades**
- 42 Applications, a decrease from 43 applications in 2013-14
- 224 kms, a decrease of 36 kms from 2013-14
- Estimated Construction Costs: $29,663,851.44
Saskatchewan Municipal Awards Program

SARM again partnered with the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association and the Ministry of Government Relations to deliver the Saskatchewan Municipal Awards Program (SMA) in 2013.

In early 2013 the SMA Program was redesigned and refocused to ensure those municipal best practices that were winning awards were being shared with all Saskatchewan municipalities. It was decided that in 2013 the awards would be presented at the SARM Midterm and SUMA Annual Conventions in 2013 so all municipalities could be made aware of the best practices being awarded.

In 2013 the SMA selection committee reviewed 22 nominations which involved 46 different Saskatchewan municipalities. The winners that were selected included the following:

First Place: Harvest for Hunger (Towns and RMs of Churchbridge and Langenburg)

Winning Practice: A one-day event coordinated by more than 400 volunteers, attended by roughly 6,500 people, and which raised $40,000 for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank while raising awareness about the ongoing issue of global hunger.

Second Place: Anti-Bullying Bylaw (Town of Eston)

Winning Practice: An anti-bullying bylaw that can be used by the town, school, and local RCMP to educate, raise awareness, prevent bullying, and create concrete enforcement tools.

Third Place: Logan Green Water Management System (City of Yorkton)

Winning Practice: An innovative, environmentally friendly, and cost-effective new water treatment plant that created 210 acres of green space while ensuring a 25-year supply of water for the city.

Regional Cooperation Award: Twin Lakes Community Planning Association (Towns of Carrot River, Choiceland, and Nipawin, Villages of Codette and White Fox, Resort Village of Tobin Lake, RMs of Moose Range, Nipawin, and Torch River)

Winning Practice: A regional planning association that became a formal planning district, giving communities more opportunities to work together on issues of mutual interest and benefit.

Rural Municipal Administrators Internship Program (MAIP)

The Rural Municipal Administrator Internship Program (MAIP) provides $20,000.00 in funding for RMs to train and mentor the selected interns and the host municipality receives a grant to cost-share the intern’s salary. The intern gets full-time, paid, hands-on training in rural municipal administration, while meeting the requirements to become certified as an administrator from the Rural Board of Examiners.
Six interns and RMs successfully completed the program in 2013 and there are currently three active placements across the province. There is a continuous application intake process for the program that allows SARM to accept application from both RMs and potential interns on an ongoing basis. In 2013 we added thirteen interns and two RMs to the candidate pool.

**Rural Municipal Administrator Scholarship (SRMAS)**

SARM awarded the 2013 Rural Municipal Administration Scholarships to three deserving students of the Local Government Authority (LGA) Certificate Program. The three winners were: Melanie Hartley of Saskatoon, Carrie Turnbull of Wadena, and Jennifer Josephson of Strasburg. They were each awarded a $1,000 scholarship and were selected based on their academic achievement, demonstrated interest in Administration as a career in rural Saskatchewan, and their knowledge of and contributions to rural Saskatchewan.

This ongoing Scholarship Program was created by SARM to assist in developing and promoting the profession of Administration in rural Saskatchewan. Students who successfully complete a class in the LGA Certificate program in 2013 will be eligible to win next year.

**Municipal Capacity Development Program (MCDP)**

The Municipal Capacity Development Program (MCDP) continued to work hard in 2013 to facilitate relationships between municipalities and provide a clear path for inter-municipal cooperation. Municipalities that engaged in inter-municipal cooperation were able to share knowledge, enhance services and processes, strengthen their region and help to sustain community resources for future generations.

MCDP works with municipal leaders to facilitate development of inter-municipal projects; educate on the potential for regional cooperation; and research issues that matter to municipalities. In 2013 MCDP facilitated open communication between municipal leaders from 8 inter-municipal groups and supported the development of 14 inter-municipal projects from a waste management study to shared municipal services and mutual aid agreements. MCDP hosted its 2nd Inter-Municipal Conference for 125 delegates from 71 municipalities to educate on important issues in Saskatchewan, and featured workshops on how regional cooperation can be used to deal with these issues. MCDP also responded to more than 50 request for research from inter-municipal working groups, associations and individual municipalities on topics such as regional bylaw enforcement, waste water agreements, strategic planning, grant opportunities, and road maintenance agreements. We continued to add new resources to our website, [www.municipalcapacity.ca](http://www.municipalcapacity.ca), as our research entered new territory.

Thank you to all appointed and elected officials who participated in the Municipal Capacity Development Program in 2013. Your work is inspiring further regional cooperation and its benefits in Saskatchewan. This program belongs to the members from SARM and SUMA, and I would encourage all municipal leaders to consider taking advantage of our services in 2014.
Municipal Leadership and Development Program (MLDP)

The Municipal Leadership Development Program held its 2013 winter workshops in Saskatoon on February 2nd and March 11th. Delegates attending the SUMA and SARM Annual Conventions were given an opportunity to participate in one of five workshops offered prior to both conventions. Close to 270 municipal leaders from all areas of the province participated in the winter session.

Certificates of Completion were presented to 40 elected officials and administrators in 2013. Of those, 28 were recognized for their initiative in completing the program at the SARM Annual Convention in March.

Fall marked the 10th anniversary of the MLDP and to commemorate the milestone, a redesigned MLDP website was launched on September 13th. The new site features updated content, an improved design layout that’s easy to navigate and online registration. In addition to re-launching the website, a new program logo was unveiled in September.

The Municipal Leaders’ Roles and Responsibilities module for SARM members was held in Regina on November 5th, the day prior to the SARM Midterm Convention. Seventy-five delegates attended the half-day workshop that featured an overview of SARM’s structure and services, and presentations by the Ministry of Government Relations, SARM Manager of Legal Services, Mike Morris and RMAA Past President, Don McCallum.

The 2013 fall session consisted of ten workshops scheduled throughout the last two weeks in November. The workshops were hosted in various communities around the province from Nipawin to Assiniboia and from Biggar to Esterhazy and six locations in-between. Total attendance for the fall session was just over two hundred.