



REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY



October 3, 2014

Letter from the Chair of the Board of Directors

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the RDEK's Regional Sustainability Strategy. Through this document we are establishing a long term vision for this region, a vision that reflects our commitment to balance, to diversity, to improving what we have now and to seeking out new opportunities for building upon the quality of life enjoyed by East Kootenay residents.

This strategy provides a common reference point for the Board to evaluate its strategic priorities. By considering our decisions and actions in relation to the sustainability principles and objectives contained herein, the Board can ensure that its business continues to move the region toward its long term goals.

"Rob C. Gay"
Rob C. Gay, Chair

October 3, 2014
Date

Letter from the Chief Administrative Officer

Through the implementation of the policies, bylaws and strategic direction established by the Board, the management and staff of the RDEK advance regional priorities in a professional, efficient and client-focused manner. We strive to continue developing a region that is strong and effective by serving our rural residents and our municipalities to the best of our abilities, and by fostering cooperation and building partnerships along the way.

The administration of the RDEK is committed to ensuring that our actions and our operational strategies are aligned with the vision statements contained in the Regional Sustainability Strategy.

"Lee-Ann Crane
Lee-Ann Crane, CAO

October 3, 2014
Date

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1.0 Regional Overview

The Regional District of East Kootenay is located in the southeast corner of British Columbia. At 28,244 km², the region covers a portion of the eastern Purcell Mountains and the southern Rocky Mountains west of the continental divide. Between these two mountain ranges lie the Rocky Mountain Trench and the region's two main river systems, the Columbia and the Kootenay.

The RDEK is comprised of three subregions - Columbia Valley, Central and Elk Valley - each with a number of distinct communities, geographic and climatic features. Development is concentrated in the valley bottom municipalities and a number of smaller rural hubs. Cranbrook is the largest community in the region and provides a number of important regional services. The rural areas are characterized by a dispersed development pattern intermingled with agricultural operations and surrounded by mixed coniferous forests, grasslands, lakes and wetlands. Industrial and recreational access roads provide entry into expansive mountainous backcountry and wilderness areas, including a number of internationally significant parks and protected areas.

The region contains 56,655 residents, approximately three quarters of whom live in one of the RDEK's incorporated municipalities. Overall, the region's population has been relatively stable for the past two decades, experiencing only a small increase or decline in population between national censuses. Like many jurisdictions in North America, the RDEK is gradually aging as the proportion of the population under 25 steadily decreases while the share of the population over 55 steadily increases.

The region's proximity to the population centres of southern Alberta has had a major influence on the development of the area. An important characteristic of the regional population is its seasonal fluctuation, most notably in Electoral Area F, where as few as 30% of dwelling units are occupied by permanent residents on a full time basis. The age and seasonality of the RDEK's inhabitants represents a significant challenge to both the social foundation of many communities, as well as the effective delivery of many public services.

The East Kootenay economy has been described as having three pillars: mining, forestry and tourism. Construction, manufacturing and public services (health, education, and government) are also important components of the regional economy. Compared to the provincial average, the East Kootenay has a competitive, well educated and skilled workforce.

Governed by a Board of Directors and administered by professional staff, the RDEK functions as a partnership of the nine municipalities and the six electoral areas within its boundaries. These jurisdictions work together through the RDEK to coordinate and deliver over 100 different local and regional services ranging vastly in size, function and participants. The RDEK operates under the authority of the *Local Government Act* and other provincial legislation.

Additional information about the RDEK and the region can be found in the current RDEK Regional Profile and in the *Regional Sustainability Strategy Background Report* (February, 2014).

2.0 Introduction

The Regional Sustainability Strategy (RSS) provides the RDEK with a wide ranging, long term planning tool. It equips the region with a “sustainability lens” to guide and evaluate operations and decision-making. It does this by employing the following planning principles:

- encouraging *integration* between different RDEK departments, different types of regional plans and planning processes;
- supporting *collaboration* between the RDEK and other public and private agencies;
- collating over a decade’s worth of *public consultation* and input received through an extensive range of previous planning processes, priority setting and opinion gathering exercises;
- and finally, identifying methods for the *implementation* of the vision statements developed for each policy area.

The RSS is being completed to meet RDEK obligations under the Federal/Provincial/UBCM Gas Tax Agreement. It also provides the RDEK with a single overarching reference point for its activities, including future planning and priority setting processes. While the RDEK has used a more focused “regional growth policy” to guide certain deliberations and planning processes in the past, it has lacked a single broad strategic plan to coordinate all aspects of the organization’s activities. The RSS will now fulfill that role.

The process to develop the RSS was initiated by the Board of Directors in December 2013. *The Regional Sustainability Strategy Background Report* was completed in February 2014. In March, the Board of Directors participated in an intensive visioning workshop to shape the preliminary vision statements for each policy area. The vision statements were shared with each electoral area Advisory Planning Commission, RDEK staff, and the public (by way of an online survey) who then refined the vision statements and provided input on the most important actions necessary to achieve those visions. The resulting input was compiled and synthesized by staff. A draft strategy was reviewed by the Board of Directors in August. A final public comment period followed in late August and the document was revised in September. The RSS was adopted by the Board on October 3, 2014.

There are 10 policy areas. The policy areas encompass the range of services, activities and interests that are either the direct responsibility of the RDEK or are matters regularly considered by the Board. In other words, the policy areas cover almost all of the activities the RDEK directly participates in or has the ability to influence and advocate for through its relationships with other orders of government, non-governmental organizations, businesses and residents.

Each chapter contains the following elements:

- a description of the matters covered by the policy area;
- what the RDEK currently does and how it does it;
- a vision statement;
- important objectives and actions for achieving that vision;
- and, measures for evaluating the success of those activities.

3.0 Transportation

3.1 Vision

East Kootenay businesses, residents and visitors are well served by a multi-modal transportation network. The region benefits from capitalizing on existing transportation assets and developing local transportation options.

3.2 Background

Transportation means the movement of goods and people around the region for both business and pleasure. It includes all types of transportation modes (air, train, vehicle, bicycle and foot) and related infrastructure (airports, roads, tracks and trails).

The local economy is dependent on the transportation infrastructure connecting communities within the region and to the rest of the world. The Canadian Rockies International Airport is a significant regional transportation asset. The public has indentified that alternative modes of transportation, such as trails, are important to the environmental and social well-being of the region as well.

What Transportation related services does the RDEK provide?

- Elk Valley Airport
- Intersection Lighting
- Public Transit
- Regional Trails
- Emergency Management Programs
- Participation on the Highway 3 Mayors and Chairs Committee

What bylaws and policies govern the RDEK's Transportation services?

- Subregional Emergency Response & Recovery Plans
- Regional Parks Plan
- Subdivision Servicing Bylaw
- Green Fleet Policy
- Leases & Service Agreements
- Corporate Policies

What issues are outside of the direct control of the RDEK but are matters that the RDEK may be able to influence?

- The provincial highway system, including rural roads, is managed by the Province;
- Municipalities are responsible for the design and maintenance of local roads within their jurisdictions;
- Railways, aviation and boating are federally regulated.

3.3 Objectives and Actions

The RDEK will pursue the following objectives and actions to achieve the Transportation vision:

3.3.1 Public Consultation

The RDEK will engage and consult with rural communities to determine local transportation priorities, including transit services, airport operations, and non-motorized greenways.

[connections: community planning, environment, economy]

3.3.2 Transit

The RDEK will work with the region's municipalities when considering changes to, or expansion of, the regional transit system.

[connections: environment, economy, social services]

3.3.3 Greenways

The expansion of the system of non-motorized greenways between communities, including rail to trail conversions, is supported; consideration will be given to maintaining these assets through the electoral area park and trail services in conjunction with municipal and other partnerships.

[connections: community planning, environment, economy, social services]

3.3.4 Provincial Highways

The maintenance, recapitalization and improvement of the region's highway system are essential for long term economic growth and development. The RDEK will advocate for ongoing investment in the provincial highway system and for the greater use of rail to move freight.

[connections: economy]

3.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

The following measures are among the indicators that the RDEK can use to monitor and evaluate the success of implementing the Transportation objectives and actions:

- Investment in highway safety and efficiency upgrades;
- Transit service statistics;
- Number, length and users of community greenway connections.

4.0 Environment

4.1 Vision

By balancing ecosystem function with natural resource management, the East Kootenay's diverse, world class environment is protected and conserved.

4.2 Background

A sustainable environment means ensuring that our air, water, local and regional ecosystems and natural areas are healthy and safeguarded; this includes the region's flora and fauna, mountains, forests, rivers, wetlands and lakes. While many attributes of the environment may not be under the direct control of the RDEK, our services, policies and actions can directly influence the health of the environment; the RDEK can also be an advocate and lead other public and private organizations that influence or control the environment.

The environment is a primary concern for the region's residents. In public consultation processes, the protection of the natural environment is consistently ranked as one of the most important considerations when decisions are made about development and economic activities. The natural environment is also integral to both the quality of life of individuals for recreational purposes and the provision of economic opportunities for many businesses.

What Environment related services does the RDEK provide?

- Regional Parks & Trails
- Invasive Plant Management
- Conservation Initiatives (Access Guardian, Local Conservation Fund)
- Current and Long Range Planning
- Mosquito Control

What bylaws and policies govern the RDEK's Environmental services?

- Regional Parks Plan
- Official Community Plans
- Corporate Policies and Service Agreements

What issues are outside of the direct control of the RDEK but are matters that the RDEK may be able to influence?

- Crown Land Management;
- The responsibility for the management of many aspects of the environment, such as water, air and wildlife, resides with the Province.

4.3 **Objectives and Actions**

The RDEK will pursue the following objectives and actions to achieve the vision for the Environment:

4.3.1 Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA)

The RDEK will:

- a) Consider identification and designation of ESA development permit areas in all Official Community Plans; such areas may include sensitive shorelines, rare and endangered habitat, and regionally significant ecosystem features;
- b) Consider the development of a greenspace acquisition strategy in support of the “conservation subdivision design” (CSD) objectives contained in Official Community Plans.

[connections: community planning, social services, climate and energy]

4.3.2 Groundwater

Improved criteria, more resources and additional partnerships are needed to monitor groundwater aquifer quantity and quality in relation to current demand, future development proposals and climate change.

[connections: infrastructure, community planning, social services, economy, climate and energy]

4.3.3 Compliance

Help curtail environmental transgressions by advocating for the improved enforcement of existing regulations by all orders of government.

[connections: community planning, social services]

4.3.4 Crown Land

The RDEK will:

- a) Support land use planning on Crown land, including resource and recreation management.
- b) Advocate for more local control over activities occurring in domestic watersheds.

[connections: infrastructure, community planning]

4.3.5 Partnerships

Collaborate with industry, public agencies, Columbia Basin Trust and other non-governmental organizations to advance environmental protection and enhancement programs.

4.3.6 Resource Extraction

Improve the communication between industry and the RDEK to ensure that community interests are adequately considered in resource development plans.

[connections: community planning, economy]

4.3.7 Air Quality

Preserve regional air quality through transportation, energy, and related programs.

[connections: transportation, community planning, climate and energy]

4.3.8 Corporate

Enhance the coordination of RDEK departments during current and long range planning processes and in infrastructure projects.

[connections: community planning, infrastructure]

4.4 **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The following measures are among the indicators that the RDEK can use to monitor and evaluate the success of implementing the Environment objectives and actions:

- Extent of ESA development permit areas;
- Advancements in the mapping and evaluation of regional groundwater aquifers and air shed quality;
- Improvements or changes to Crown land and industry referral processes that accommodate community perspectives;
- The number and type of new partnerships or programs to improve and enhance the environment;
- Amount of greenspace preserved under CSD policies;
- Bylaw enforcement statistics.

5.0 Economy

5.1 Vision

The East Kootenay sustains a diverse economy, where business growth and development are supported, the region's location and lifestyle opportunities are capitalized on, and the natural environment is conserved.

5.2 Background

The economy refers to the local and regional conditions that support and nurture such things as: a diversified and skilled workforce; job opportunities; and attracting spending and investment. It may include branding and marketing as well as sector specific initiatives such as those benefiting tourism, agriculture, forestry or mining. The economy fulfills important quality of life and sustainability objectives by providing one of the foundations necessary for residents to continue to work, live and enjoy themselves in the RDEK.

Residents support a wide variety of economic activities in the region. The public has recognized the following as important to the sustainability of the regional economy: provision of quality infrastructure to support growth, a diversification of economic activities and opportunities, and employment training.

What Economy related services does the RDEK provide?

- Designated Accommodation Area Tax
- Broadband
- Airports
- Columbia Basin Trust Funding Programs
- Current and Long Range Planning

What bylaws and policies govern the RDEK's Economic services?

- Leases, Service Agreements and Bylaws
- Administrative Services
- Columbia Basin Trust Community Directed Funds, Community Initiatives and Affected Areas Programs
- Official Community Plans and Zoning Bylaws

What issues are outside of the direct control of the RDEK but are matters that the RDEK may be able to influence?

- For several years, the RDEK has not provided an economic development function or service. The RDEK has, however, facilitated economic development activities indirectly through the provision of other services like infrastructure, granting programs, impact studies, land use planning and zoning, and advocating to other orders of government for legislative changes and the provision of programs and activities that will benefit the regional economy.

5.3 **Objectives and Actions**

The RDEK will pursue the following objectives and actions to achieve the vision for the Economy:

5.3.1 Regulations

Support the following regulatory initiatives and services:

- a) Perform a periodic internal review to ensure that the RDEK regulatory regime supports sustainability objectives without unnecessary or superfluous regulations that create barriers to business growth and development.
- b) Lead in helping business to navigate regulatory approvals at all levels, including coordinating services with other regulatory agencies to streamline review and approval processes.

[connections: community planning, infrastructure, social services, environment]

5.3.2 Backcountry

Maintain and enhance backcountry recreation assets and wilderness opportunities to support a diversified tourism sector.

[connections: environment]

5.3.4 Light Industry

Increase the number and type of value added industries to augment the region's economic pillars (mining, forestry and tourism). Support these opportunities through municipal and RDEK land use regulations, transportation and infrastructure services, workforce training and other business support programs.

[connections: community planning, infrastructure, social services, environment, transportation]

5.3.5 Broadband

To maintain economic growth and diversification opportunities, the RDEK will support the enhancement and completion of the provision of broadband infrastructure in the region through the direct supply of service, encouraging private and public sector investment, and advocating for legislative and regulatory change to facilitate the provision of broadband service.

[connections: social services, infrastructure]

5.3.6 Diversification

Many opportunities to diversify the regional economy have been identified; among the most frequently cited prospects are:

- a) attracting new industry and “head office” administrative jobs to the region – the relatively low cost of living, lifestyle amenities, and airport service are important marketing attributes;
- b) accommodating high tech, clean tech, the knowledge sector and nomadic entrepreneurs;
- c) ensuring that appropriately zoned lands and the necessary supporting infrastructure exists to capitalize quickly on development opportunities;
- d) allowing home based business to act as an incubator for new business growth and development.

[connections: community planning, infrastructure]

5.3.7 Location

Many types of commercial development and business activity are best suited to locating in a municipality where infrastructure and access to other business support services exist. RDEK Official Community Plans will provide more specific direction with respect to commercial development opportunities in the rural area.

[connections: community planning, infrastructure, social services, environment, transportation]

5.4 **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The following measures are among the indicators that the RDEK can use to monitor and evaluate the success of implementing the Economy objectives and actions:

- Availability of commercial and residential access to broadband;
- New business development;
- Inventory of “employment lands.”

6.0 Community Planning



6.1 Vision

Community planning at the RDEK is supported by engaged, informed residents and strong interagency relationships. Up to date plans and policies inform consistent decision making by the Regional Board.

6.2 Background

Sustainable community planning means designing and building communities that utilize energy and public services efficiently, nurture healthy residents, and protect environmentally sensitive areas; it includes the RDEK's land use planning and development regulations, including the regulation and inspection of buildings.

The rural character of the region is highly valued by residents. RDEK consultation processes have identified that land use decision making requires reference to a local community-specific vision that reflects the uniqueness of that area. Overall, rural residents view proposals for new residential growth and development cautiously and conservatively. Smaller scale and lower density development is the preferred pattern of residential growth throughout the rural portions of the region. Commercial development in the rural areas is generally preferred to be limited to local services and otherwise directed to the municipalities.

What Community Planning related services does the RDEK provide?

- Current and Long Range Planning
- Building and Plumbing Inspection
- Bylaw Enforcement
- Subdivision Review
- Floodplain Management

What bylaws and policies govern the RDEK's Community Planning services?

- Official Community Plans and Zoning Bylaws
- Subdivision Servicing Bylaw
- Development Applications Bylaw
- Building Regulation Bylaw
- Mobile Home Park Bylaw
- Campground Bylaw
- Other Regulatory Services

What issues are outside of the direct control of the RDEK but are matters that the RDEK may be able to influence?

- Crown Land Management;
- Agricultural Land Reserve Management;
- Subdivision Approval;
- BC Building Code;

- Other land uses and regulatory spheres under the direct control of the provincial or federal government such as boating, aviation, Indian Reserves, and many resource extraction and environmental matters.

6.3 **Objectives and Actions**

The RDEK will pursue the following objectives and actions to achieve the Community Planning vision:

6.3.1 Public Education

Public engagement and participation in land use planning processes will be assisted and enhanced by public education opportunities.

6.3.2 Planning and Zoning

The RDEK will work to ensure that:

- a) All private land in the RDEK is covered by an Official Community Plan and zoning bylaw;
- b) Official Community Plans, land use and other development regulations are regularly reviewed in order to implement best practices and refresh the community's vision.

[connections: social services, economy, environment, infrastructure, transportation]

6.3.3 Partnerships

Strong interagency partnerships will be developed to assist with policy development and support the implementation of plans.

6.3.4 Compliance

The implementation of community plans will be assisted by the enforcement of land use and building regulations.

[connections: environment, climate and energy, infrastructure, social services, solid waste]

6.3.5 Quality Development

Among the goals for promoting quality development in the rural area are:

- a) Minimizing the strain on public finances and other resources resulting from new development;
- b) Balancing new density with appropriate requirements for community servicing;

- c) Avoiding development on hazardous, environmentally sensitive and agricultural lands; or, if this cannot be avoided, ensuring that the developer provides appropriate mitigation or compensation for the impact of the development as part of the approval process.

[connections: infrastructure, transportation, social services, climate and energy, environment, solid waste]

6.3.6 Corporate

RDEK staff will:

- a) Reference policy, context and past decisions to support the administration of land use applications;
- b) Coordinate inter-departmental referrals to improve the management of a range of related planning issues including invasive plants, emergency management, structural fire protection, interface fire, greenspace dedication and infrastructure services.

[connections: social services, infrastructure, environment, solid waste]

6.4 **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The following measures are among the indicators that the RDEK can use to monitor and evaluate the success of implementing the Community Planning objectives and actions:

- The extent of Official Community Plan and zoning bylaw coverage;
- Implementation of a revolving Official Community Plan and zoning bylaw work plan;
- Reviews of regulatory bylaws to reflect provincial and national best practices where appropriate;
- Improvements to inter-departmental referral processes;
- Number and type of collaborative planning and development management partnerships with public and private agencies.

7.0 Solid Waste

7.1 Vision

Management of solid waste by the RDEK is cost effective, encompasses revenue generating opportunities, and invests in diversion activities. Best practices and public education are two of the tools used to improve services.

7.2 Background

Sustainability in waste management means reducing the amount of waste produced by the region and managing waste streams more efficiently and effectively. Improved waste management can be achieved by following the “5 R’s” of responsible waste management: reduce, reuse, recycle, recover and residual management.

Recycling and solid waste are frequently mentioned by the public as a challenge for the region. An inability to change consumer practice, access to recycling and diversion opportunities, the absence of composting programs and overall program costs are concerns that have been raised in public consultation processes.

What Solid Waste related services does the RDEK provide?

- Solid Waste Disposal
- Recycling Programs
- Public Education
- Bylaw Enforcement

What bylaws and policies govern the RDEK’s Solid Waste services?

- Solid Waste Management Plan and Regulatory Bylaws
- Contracts for Waste Hauling, Landfill and Transfer Station Operations
- Public Education

What issues are outside of the direct control of the RDEK but are matters that the RDEK may be able to influence?

- Illegal disposal on Crown land;
- Product and producer responsibility programs.

7.3 Objectives and Actions

The RDEK will pursue the following objectives and actions to achieve the Solid Waste vision:

7.3.1 Compliance

The proper use of RDEK solid waste facilities will be improved through compliance monitoring and bylaw enforcement.

[connections: environment, climate and energy, social services]

7.3.2 Cost Effective

Consider moving towards a user-pay system for access and use of RDEK solid waste management facilities.

7.3.3 Reduce Waste

- a) Establish targets for waste reduction;
- b) Develop public incentives for proper waste diversion and disposal;
- c) Consider implementing product bans at RDEK transfer stations to ensure appropriate disposal by the end user;
- d) Advocate for improved access to extended producer responsibility programs.

[connections: environment, climate and energy, social services]

7.3.4 Best Practices and New Technology

The RDEK's primary responsibilities are to:

- a) manage residuals;
- b) promote best practices in reducing, reusing, recovering and recycling; including the use of new and alternate technologies in waste management.

[connections: environment, climate and energy, community planning]

7.3.5 Public Education

Solid Waste management goals will be supported by a public education program that targets second homeowners and visitors in addition to local residents and businesses.

7.4 **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The following measures are among the indicators that the RDEK can use to monitor and evaluate the success of implementing the Solid Waste objectives and actions:

- Review and amendment of the Solid Waste Management Plan and related regulatory bylaws;
- Waste and diversion statistics;
- The number and type of public education and incentive programs;
- The number and type of new revenue streams in the solid waste programs;
- Compliance statistics.

8.0 Infrastructure

8.1 Vision

Infrastructure services provided by the RDEK are high quality, safe and supported by partnerships. Long term planning accommodates unforeseen demands, community needs, and maintenance and replacement costs.

8.2 Background

Sustainable infrastructure means the provision of drinking water and wastewater treatment in a manner that protects public health and reduces negative environmental impacts. Stormwater management and infrastructure associated with flood and water level control are also included in this policy area.

The high costs associated with constructing and maintaining water and wastewater infrastructure is recognized by communities that are serviced by the RDEK. The desire for the provision of quality services is tempered by concerns about the high costs associated with new infrastructure services and upgrades.

What Infrastructure related services does the RDEK provide?

- Sewer
- Water
- Storm Water Management
- Flood & Debris Torrent Control
- Water Level Control
- Street Lighting
- Broadband

What bylaws and policies govern the RDEK's Infrastructure services?

- Service Establishment and Regulatory Bylaws
- Subdivision Servicing Bylaw
- Water Conservation Plan

What issues are outside of the direct control of the RDEK but are matters that the RDEK may be able to influence?

- The Ministry of Health and Interior Health Authority are responsible for establishing water quality objectives;
- The construction and operation of private water and sewer systems are regulated by the Province;
- The region has many privately owned water and sewer systems that provide services to specific developments. Sometimes the RDEK is involved in the operation of these systems and sometimes it is not;
- There are many flood control works in the region that are not owned or operated by the RDEK;
- Unless a specific service area has been established by the RDEK, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure is responsible for stormwater management through the subdivision approval process.

8.3 **Objectives and Actions**

The RDEK will pursue the following objectives and actions to achieve the Infrastructure vision:

8.3.1 Partnerships

The RDEK is open to partnerships with First Nations and private interests in the provision of regional water and sewer services.

8.3.2 Water Use

The RDEK will:

- a) Continue to have water use reduction targets in its water conservation plan;
- b) Implement water metering in all of its domestic water systems.

[connections: environment, climate and energy]

8.3.3 Asset Management

An asset management plan and reserve fund policy will be established for each RDEK owned water and sewer system.

8.3.4 Acquisition Strategies

- a) A formal policy will be developed to establish RDEK requirements for the acquisition and takeover of:
 - i. privately owned water and sewer systems;
 - ii. privately owned or orphaned dams, dikes and other flood control works.
- b) For the RDEK to take over ownership or maintenance of infrastructure, a service must be established.

[connections: community planning, environment, climate and energy, social services]

8.3.5 Cost Effective

Revenue generating opportunities and the user-pay principle will be implemented to support the cost of operating infrastructure services.

8.3.6 Public Consultation

The RDEK will continue to consult with service area participants and Utility Advisory Commissions regarding asset management strategies.

8.3.7 Corporate

Community plans will consider infrastructure capacity in future growth and development scenarios.

[connections: community planning]

8.4 **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The following measures are among the indicators that the RDEK can use to monitor and evaluate the success of implementing the Infrastructure objectives and actions:

- Amendments to water conservation plan(s);
- Water use statistics;
- Number of asset management plans and reserve fund policies;
- Number of and type of new services, acquired assets and servicing partnerships;
- Number and type of revenue generating opportunities reflecting the user-pay principle.

9.0 Agriculture & Food



9.1 Vision

Agriculture in the East Kootenay capitalizes on area assets to support local production and ensure food security. The ALR is managed by local government and the regulations respecting the processing, distribution and sale of local food are simplified.

9.2 Background

The sustainability of Agriculture & Food includes the preservation of productive agricultural land, production of agricultural products and food security. This policy area is influenced by the viability of local agriculture in a local, national and global food distribution system, changes in climate and the availability of water and arable land. Agriculture & Food is linked to the economic and environmental well-being of the region.

Consumers have identified that the three most important benefits for having farmland in the region are: local food production, economic diversification and cultural heritage. Food producers also rank local food production and cultural heritage amongst their top three benefits. Both consumers and producers envision that future regional agriculture will include small scale food production that is focused on local markets.

Rural residents have identified that there is a need to manage Crown land to accommodate a range of uses. Cattle production in the region relies on access to Crown range, which has been identified as a valuable asset to regional agricultural production, but also a source of potential conflict as competing demands on Crown land increase.

What Agriculture & Food related services does the RDEK provide?

- Current and Long Range Planning
- Invasive Plant Control

What bylaws and policies govern the RDEK's Agriculture & Food services?

- Agricultural Plan
- Official Community Plans
- Zoning and Regulatory Bylaws

What issues are outside of the direct control of the RDEK but are matters that the RDEK may be able to influence?

- Food safety, processing and agricultural waste disposal regulations;
- Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and "Right to Farm" legislation.

9.3 Objectives and Actions

The RDEK will pursue the following objectives and actions to achieve the vision for Agriculture & Food:

9.3.1 Processing

Regional food processing facilities, including abattoirs, are supported.

[connections: community planning, economy]

9.3.2 ALR Management

- a) ALR boundary review processes and delegated decision-making agreements are supported;
- b) third party access to and use of fallow agricultural lands is supported;
- c) capable and suitable farm and range lands should be retained whenever possible.

[connections: community planning, economy, environment]

9.3.3 Advocacy

The RDEK supports balancing the need for food safety with the removal of federal and provincial impediments to the production, processing and distribution of local food products.

[connections: social services, economy]

9.3.4 Natural Resources

The RDEK supports the agricultural industry's access to the region's relative abundance of water, sun and geothermal energy to support food production.

[connections: environment, climate and energy, economy]

9.3.5 Agricultural Planning

Support for the local food industry and the region's agricultural resources will be provided through the implementation of relevant plans and the supporting policies and actions.

9.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

The following measures are among the indicators that the RDEK can use to monitor and evaluate the success of implementing the Agriculture & Food objectives and actions:

- Implementation of the RDEK Agricultural Plan and related policies;
- ALR boundary reviews and delegated decision-making agreements;
- Number and type of local agriculture and food related businesses and services;
- Agricultural Land Use Inventories;
- ALR statistics;
- Statistics Canada Census of Agriculture.

10.0 Climate & Energy

10.1 Vision

The RDEK is resilient to climate extremes; green practices, technologies and alternative energy sources are broadly utilized.

10.2 Background

Climate & Energy refers to the amount and type of energy consumed by the RDEK and the residents, businesses and organizations in rural communities, and the impact this has on climate, both locally and globally. Climate is different than weather in that it refers to long term trends, not seasonal or year-to-year differences. This policy area concerns itself largely with greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

A general level of knowledge about the potential negative impacts of climate change and rising greenhouse gas emissions is evident within the region. However, thinking on climate change is evolving beyond the potential negative impacts, to focus on the possible opportunities that climate change may bring to the region, most notably in the agricultural sector. The potential effects of a changing climate have also been noted in relation to tourism and amenity migration.

What Climate & Energy related services does the RDEK provide?

- Climate Action Reserve Fund
- Partnerships with other agencies to deliver climate and energy related programs.

What bylaws, policies and programs govern and shape the RDEK's Climate & Energy services?

- a) Carbon Neutral Kootenays (2009-2013)
- b) Community Energy Manager (2013-2014)
- c) Communities Adapting to Climate Change Initiative (2011-2013)
- d) Carbon Neutral Action Plan and associated policies
- e) Official Community Plans

10.3 Objectives and Actions

The RDEK will pursue the following objectives and actions to achieve the Climate & Energy vision:

10.3.1 Emergency Response

- a) Match RDEK emergency response to the severity of the event;
- b) Take proactive steps to protect critical infrastructure from interface fire and flooding events.

[connections: community planning, infrastructure, social services]

10.3.2 Green Technology

- a) Accommodate green technology in buildings and development through RDEK bylaws and the acceptance of appropriate professional certification in the design and inspection of same;
- b) Promote and facilitate local incentives for the use of green technology in residential applications.

[connections: community planning]

10.3.3 Community Planning

- a) Consider updating regional floodplain mapping in consideration of future climate projections;
- b) Consider adding interface fire and floodplain management development permit areas to Official Community Plans to help mitigate the impacts of a changing climate;
- c) Consider adding an energy efficiency development permit area to Official Community Plans to help reduce the energy use and the resulting GHG emissions of new buildings.

[connections: community planning, environment, infrastructure]

10.3.4 Partnerships

Partner with Columbia Basin Trust, neighbouring regional districts, non-governmental organizations and other agencies in the proactive management of climate related issues.

10.3.5 Green Energy

Support green energy projects where a sound business case and demonstrable GHG reductions are evident.

[connections: economy, environment]

10.3.6 Corporate

Promote corporate GHG reduction goals through policies and employee training.

10.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

The following measures are among the indicators that the RDEK can use to monitor and evaluate the success of implementing the Climate & Energy objectives and actions:

- Implementation of climate adaptation and GHG reduction plans;
- Number and type of incentive programs and projects that support the adoption and use of green technology and energy;
- Community energy and emissions inventories;
- Corporate GHG inventories;
- Green building and construction statistics.

11.0 Social Services



11.1 Vision

The RDEK uses excellent communication in order to meet regional goals and provide social services in a fiscally responsible manner.

11.2 Background

This is a large policy area meant to capture such things as health, arts, heritage, culture, education, policing, emergency services, recreation and housing. Social services encompass a range of supports necessary to ensure the physical and mental well-being and personal enrichment of citizens.

The availability of local and regional social services is critical to the development of complete and self-sustaining communities. The absence of affordable and accessible housing options has been heard in numerous consultation processes and is a primary public concern. Consultation has also identified that housing needs are not being met across the demographic and economic spectrums. These same public consultation processes have identified other public concerns about meaningful employment opportunities at a living wage, and reasonable access to local health services. The College of the Rockies and the East Kootenay Regional Hospital are important regional assets.

What Social Services does the RDEK provide?

- Bylaw Enforcement
- Cemeteries
- Columbia Basin Trust Funding Programs
- Discretionary Grants in Aid (DGIA)
- Dog Control
- Fire & Rescue Services
- Emergency Management Programs
- RDEK General, Electoral & Financial Administration
- Community Halls
- E911
- Libraries
- Recreation
- Property Addressing
- Victim Assistance

What bylaws, policies and programs govern the RDEK's Social Services?

- Subregional Emergency Response & Recovery Plans
- Regional Parks Plan
- DGIA Policy
- Columbia Basin Trust Community Directed Funds, Community Initiatives and Affected Areas Programs
- Corporate Policies
- Service & Funding Agreements

What issues are outside of the direct control of the RDEK but are matters that the RDEK may be able to influence?

- The RDEK does not have a direct role or provide service for many social issues such as health, education, heritage, culture and the arts. Granting programs are the primary method that the RDEK is involved in many social services. Usually the RDEK advocates for other orders of government and social service providers to meet the social needs of rural communities.

11.3 Objectives and Actions

The RDEK will pursue the following objectives and actions to achieve the vision for Social Services:

11.3.1 Partnerships:

- a) Work with Columbia Basin Trust and other non-governmental organizations to advance the delivery of quality social services in the region consistent with public priorities and organizational mandates and responsibilities;
- b) Consult and coordinate with other orders of government and service providers to help plan, prioritize, and action social issues in the region.

[connections: community planning, economy]

11.3.2 Public Education

Help educate rural residents about the social services available to them as well as the different levels of public and local government services available in remote and rural areas.

11.3.3 Public Consultation

Where the RDEK can or does provide a social service, the RDEK will engage and consult with rural communities regarding service establishment and local priorities.

11.3.4 Cost

Resist the downloading to the RDEK of social programs and responsibilities from other orders of government without the commensurate provision of new funding or financial tools to pay for the cost of providing those services.

11.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

The following measures are among the indicators that the RDEK can use to monitor and evaluate the success of implementing the Social Services objectives and actions:

- Number and type of programs, services or partnerships that assist in the delivery of social services.

12.0 Governance

12.1 Vision

Governance at the RDEK is undertaken by setting and adhering to strategic priorities. Sound decision-making and the policy setting process are achieved by establishing procedures to ensure openness, transparency and accountability.

12.2 Background

Governance means the focus, efficiency and performance of the RDEK as a corporate entity and includes such things as decision making, policy and priority setting, administrative processes, and leadership.

A 2013 survey conducted by the RDEK assessed the level of client satisfaction with the services received. Overall, the survey results identified that most clients were receiving timely and effective service.

In 2012, the RDEK Board of Directors reflected on its own effectiveness and identified a number of areas for improvement.

What Governance related services does the RDEK provide?

- RDEK General, Electoral & Financial Administration
- Elections and Assent Voting

What bylaws and policies direct the RDEK's Governance services?

- Procedure Bylaw
- Corporate Policies
- Strategic Planning

What issues are outside of the direct control of the RDEK but are matters that the RDEK may be able to influence?

- Provincial legislation affecting local government authority and responsibility.

12.3 Objectives and Actions

The RDEK will pursue the following objectives and actions to achieve the Governance vision:

- a) Policies are in place to enable leading by example.
- b) Forecasting, planning and priority setting inform long term thinking.
- c) Debate is welcome and diversity is respected.
- d) Enhanced public communication and education programs keep the public informed about RDEK governance and operations.
- e) Resist the downloading of responsibilities to the RDEK from other orders of government without new stable revenues to compensate for same.

12.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

The following measures are among the indicators that the RDEK can use to monitor and evaluate the success of implementing the Governance objectives and actions:

- Client satisfaction surveys;
- Board evaluation surveys;
- Annual reporting.

13.0 Implementation

13.1 General

The Regional Sustainability Strategy will:

- a) Serve as a navigational aid for the RDEK Board of Directors and staff when setting annual strategic and operational priorities. This will help to ensure that the RDEK's year to year project plans are aligned with long term goals and working to achieve the vision statements.
- b) Be a reference point when considering new initiatives or new services. The RDEK must carefully allocate its limited resources or this strategy will not be implemented.
- c) Guide the formation of new plans and policies. The community, service and operation specific plans and polices that direct the RDEK's routine operations will be integrated across policy areas and provide the detailed strategies necessary to achieve the vision statements.

13.2 Review

The RSS should be reviewed, evaluated and reconsidered approximately every 5 years. The objectives of the review will be to:

- Evaluate the actions taken to achieve the vision statements;
- Decide if the vision statements still reflect regional aspirations or if they require refocusing;
- Determine if the goals and actions needed to achieve the vision statements require updating;
- Identify additional indicators that can assist with the future monitoring and evaluation of the strategy.

13.3 Quality of Life Survey

It is recommended that after the adoption of this strategy, that a regional "quality of life" survey be undertaken. The survey would gauge residents' quality of life generally, as well as in regards to the policy areas covered by this strategy, in order to establish a baseline accounting of public opinion and attitudes. A subsequent "quality of life" survey would then be undertaken in conjunction with the RSS review to measure changes in public opinion and attitudes and to inform amendments to the strategy.