

## FINDINGS FROM LACOMBE COUNTY TELEPHONE SURVEY

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During the months of February to April 2012 Lacombe County carried out extensive consultation in regards to environmental management. The consultation which targeted community and staff has assisted in gathering opinions and thoughts so as to provide a baseline of current perceptions, a tool to engage with our stakeholders and to provide guidance on future project planning. Over the three months, through the use of focus groups and a telephone survey 567 participants were contacted. Their information is recorded and collated in detailed reports which are available to download on the Lacombe County website [www.lacombecounty.com](http://www.lacombecounty.com).

Banister Research & Consulting Inc. conducted a telephone survey of 400 Lacombe County residents regarding perceptions and opinions on the current and future state of environmental management in the County. This survey tool provided a way of gathering a diverse and representative sample of the community. The key findings of the 2012 Environmental Perceptions Survey include:

### QUALITY OF LIFE

97% of respondents provided a high rating regarding the quality of life in Lacombe County. Factors contributing to this included the availability and maintenance of infrastructure and roads, the quiet, rural lifestyle or country living, and the centralized location and proximity to other centres.

Respondents also include poor road maintenance and poor quality of roads, managing development, keeping taxes low and the growth and development around lakes as issues respondents felt Lacombe County is presently facing. Continuity in responses was found when asked about what issues the County will face in 10 years.

### ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES FACING LACOMBE COUNTY

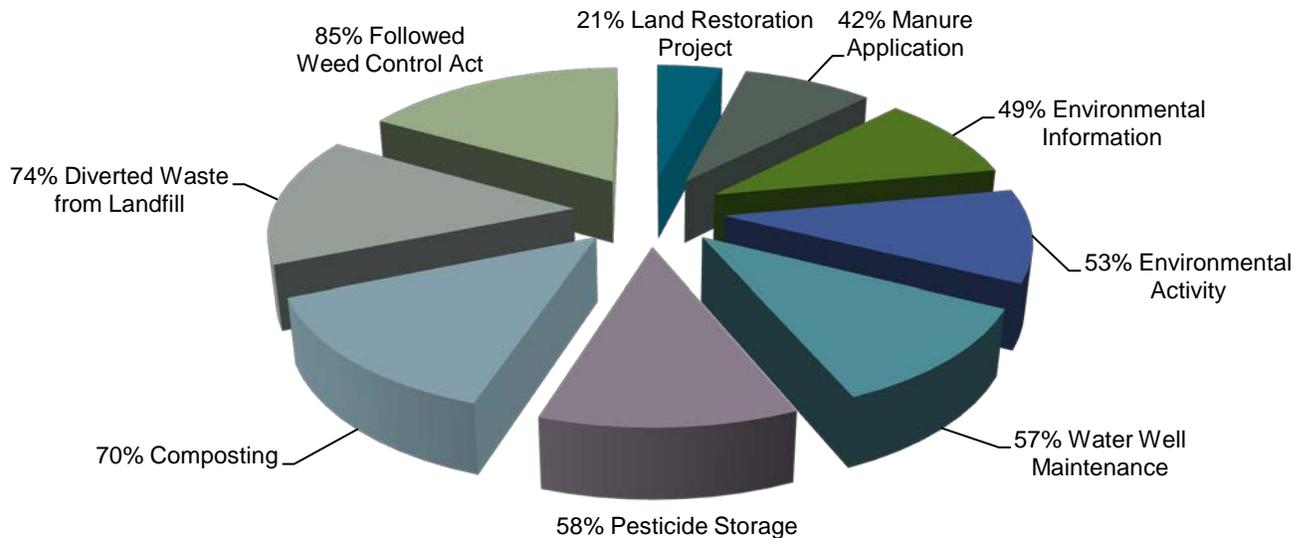
Respondents were asked what the most common environmental issues that Lacombe County is currently facing to which they reported water quality, air quality and waste generation and disposal of agricultural and household waste. When asked to prioritize the issues almost two-thirds of respondents (62%) mentioned water quality as their greatest concern, followed by fertile and healthy soils (58%) and waste generation and disposal of agricultural and household waste (58%).

When asked what level of concern respondents had about the environment a majority (83%) of respondents were concerned to some degree (rating 3, 4 or 5 out of 5). Reasons for this concern included a general concern for the future (11%), concerned, but happy with the current state (11%) and the pollution and damage caused by the industrial sector (10%).

Respondents less concerned (rating 1 or 2) about the environment stated there is nothing to worry about as everything is fine (31%) and that it is not a big deal and there is too much hype about the topic (17%).

## ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIOURS AND ACTIVITIES

Over half of respondents (53%) have participated in at least one (1) environmental activity or behaviour in the past 12 months in the graph below.



Respondents stated that an increase in awareness and knowledge of the topic, that they have always participated or that they are now being influenced by a spouse or family member were reasons for starting to undertake activities to reduce their impact on the environment.

Two-thirds (67%) of respondents stated there was no factors that prevented them from doing more to reduce their impact on the environment, while 10% stated financial obstacles, 7% stated the availability and access to facilities and 4% each mentioned time constraints and age or health issues as barriers.

Over half (54%) of respondents mentioned there was nothing more Lacombe County could do to alleviate barriers that would allow them to do more to help them reduce their impact on the environment. Although the remaining 46% suggested ideas such as bringing facilities closer or having a recycling centre at the landfill, improving existing facilities to accept more materials, extending operation hours and improving costs, and providing recycling bins and pick-up service.

## AWARENESS OF ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES

A large proportion of respondents (81%) were aware of the Alberta Weed Control Act. Almost half of respondents (45%) were aware of the Lacombe County Strategic Plan, while 41% each were aware of the Alberta Provincial Government Land-use Framework and beneficial management practices for agriculture production in Alberta. One-third (34%) of respondents were aware of the Alberta Provincial Government Water for Life Strategy.

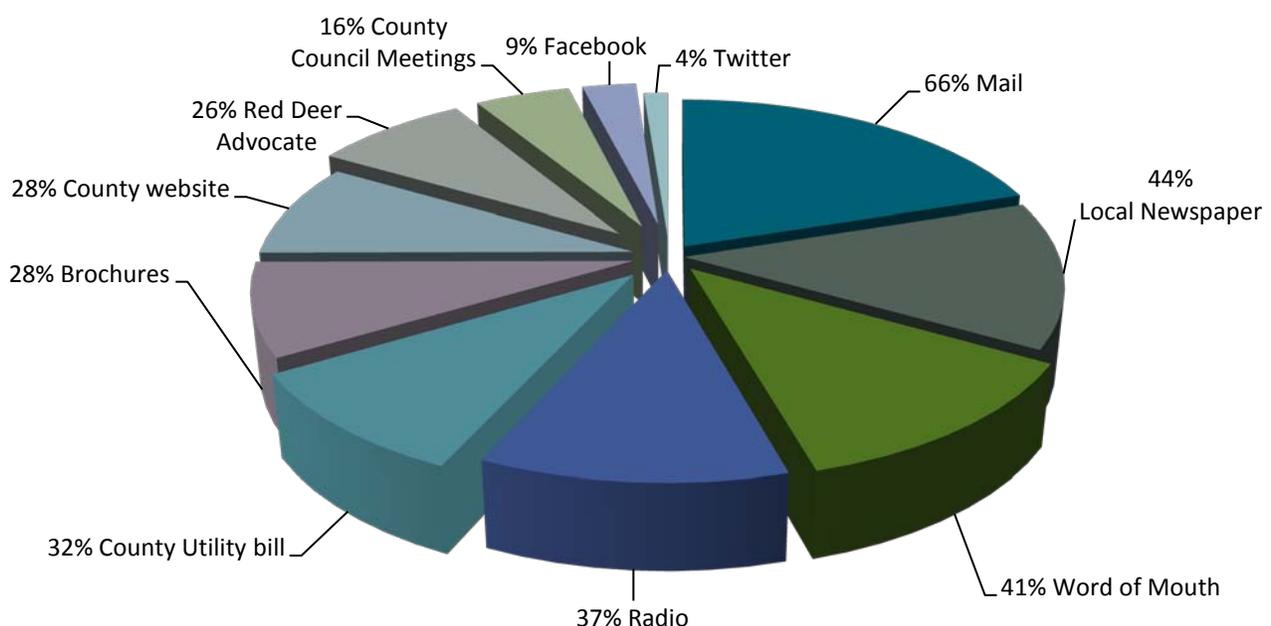
Respondents that were aware of these environmental initiatives were asked to rate their effectiveness. Initiatives that garnered a high effective rating (rating 4 or 5 out of 5) included:

- The Alberta Weed Control Act (44%)
- Beneficial management practices for agriculture production in Alberta (42%)
- Lacombe County Strategic Plan (41%)
- The Alberta Provincial Government - Water for Life Strategy (23%)
- The Alberta Provincial Government - Land-use Framework (20%)

## COMMUNICATIONS

Over half of the respondents rated Lacombe County as the most credible source for information regarding environmental topics, followed closely by family members and friends.

When asked to rate the effectiveness of a series of methods that the County could use to communicate with resident regarding environmental issues, high effective ratings (rating 4 or 5 out of 5) were provided for the following:



## FUTURE EFFORTS REGARDING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Overall, satisfaction with the County's efforts regarding environmental stewardship was high, as almost half (47%) of respondents provided a high satisfaction rating (4 or 5 out of 5), with 37% providing a neutral rating of "3" and 11% provided a dissatisfied rating (1 or 2 out of 5).

Respondents most frequently stated managing and protecting water sources (18%) was the single most important thing Lacombe County could do to protect the environment over the next 10 years. Other mentions include protecting land from development (14%) and enforcing stricter rules and regulations (9%).

## WHERE TO FROM HERE

The information contained in this report and that of the community and staff focus groups will be used to determine work plans, help set priorities and create change in our community. The next step is to complete the State of the Environment (SOE) report, a scientific document that examines quantitative data sets.

Upon completion of the SOE work will begin on writing the Environmental Management plan which is to be completed by January 2014. Ongoing consultation with the community and county staff will be of the utmost importance.

