

Stakeholder Needs Assessment

10 YEAR SCIENCE AND PROGRAM REVIEW



Stakeholder Needs Assessment Workshop Summary

Agriculture

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Evergreen Room, Lister Centre, University of Alberta



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1.0 Introduction

In 2017, the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute entered its 10th year of formal operations. Over the past decade, the ABMI has developed valuable baseline data on biodiversity and land cover to support natural resource management in Alberta. Initial decisions about the ABMI's scope and direction were based on stakeholder feedback gathered between 2002 and 2006—a time when Alberta lacked a comprehensive biodiversity monitoring program. Ten years later, as part of the ABMI 10-year Science and Program Review, a series of stakeholder needs assessment workshops are being run again to collect feedback on the performance of the Institute to date and gather input on a range of emerging initiatives. This stakeholder input will inform decision-making on ABMI operations going forward.

2.0 Background

To formally engage its stakeholders across a range of sectors, this past spring the ABMI launched a 10-year Science and Program Review. The Review has two components: 1) a Science Review to evaluate the Institute's scientific framework and the extent to which it has delivered on its initial scientific objectives; and 2) a Stakeholder Needs Assessment to evaluate the range of products and services provided by the ABMI and how they meet stakeholder needs. The Stakeholder Needs Assessment primarily comprises a series of facilitated workshops, with a survey administered before each.

The Science Review and Stakeholder Needs Assessment receive strategic oversight from the Science Expert Committee and Stakeholder Advisory Group, respectively. Each committee is responsible for assessing the results of their respective review processes and developing a final report, which is then submitted to the Steering Committee overseeing the whole process. The Steering Committee will submit recommendations to the Board of Directors by March 31, 2018. The Board of Directors will then assess and prioritize those recommendations to guide future operations.



Figure 1 ABMI 10-year Science and Program Review process visualization

3.0 Stakeholder Needs Assessment workshops

As a first step in developing the stakeholder needs assessment workshops, the ABMI identified various stakeholder groups to engage. These include groups with a historical relationship with the ABMI, as well as additional groups that would likely be interested in using ABMI data to meet their own strategic priorities. Representatives of each of these stakeholder groups were invited to join the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) that oversees the Stakeholder Needs Assessment process. In turn, the SAG membership nominated specific individuals to participate in the workshop process. In total, 9 facilitated workshops were held over the fall of 2017.

3.1 Workshop objectives

The objectives for the 9 facilitated workshops were to:

- assess the ABMI's range of products and services, and the extent to which they meet stakeholder needs;
- understand stakeholders' current and emerging biodiversity information needs; and
- solicit feedback on the ABMI's products under development and how they address stakeholders' needs.

The workshops were designed to assess the value and limitations of the ABMI's core monitoring program, as well as emerging ABMI products and services, and the extent to which they fulfill stakeholder biodiversity information needs now and into the future.

4.0 Workshop methods

This facilitated 5-hour session included:

- Part 1 – Background presentations
- Part 2 – Needs and challenges facilitated discussion
- Part 3 – ABMI innovation presentations and World Café
- Part 4 – Next steps facilitated discussion

4.1 Who was there?

ABMI Stakeholder Needs Assessment workshops were targeted, sector-specific sessions. One of the goals of the workshops was to engage with as broad a cross-section of the sector as possible. This session's participants comprised nine representatives from the agriculture sector, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Agri-Environmental Partnership of Alberta.

4.2 What did the different sessions look like?

Background presentations

There were four presentations delivered by three ABMI staff:

- *Welcome and ABMI 101* – Tara Narwani
- *Species monitoring and outcomes* – Jim Schieck
- *Land surface monitoring and outcomes* – Jahan Kariyeva
- *Ecosystem services assessment 101* – Carrie Selin

The presentations were designed to provide a background and rationale for the ABMI's 10-Year Science and Program Review, and a brief overview of the ABMI's core monitoring activities.

A) Needs and challenges group discussion

Following the introductory presentations, participants were invited to contribute to a question and answer session. The ABMI posed the following questions to workshop participants in response to the survey results:

- What data/biodiversity information are extremely important to your work activities? Why?
- How can we increase uptake of ABMI data and information products?

The discussion lasted approximately 45 minutes, during which facilitators encouraged discussion from all participants and recorded feedback to ensure no information was missed.

B) ABMI innovation – World Café

In the afternoon, participants were asked to gather for a series of presentations regarding emerging ABMI products and services. The five ten-minute presentations were:

- *Ecosystem services assessments* –Marcus Becker
- *Managing Carbon Storage in Alberta's Grasslands* – Majid Irvani
- *Knowledge translation* – Tara Narwani
- *Enhancing regional monitoring: WildTrax* – Corrina Copp
- *Creating a biodiversity network: from citizens to institutions* – Joelle Chille-Cale

After the presentations, participants were invited to visit associated stations set up in the foyer outside the room. Each station was marked by a poster reminding participants of products introduced in each presentation, and a knowledgeable ABMI staff member was present to answer questions. Workshop participants were invited to visit each station to provide feedback on the specific questions posed at each by recording information on a sheet of paper. The objective of the World Café session was to gather feedback from participants on each emerging ABMI product through the following questions:

- Is this tool useful to you and your work activities? (i.e., will it address the needs and challenges mentioned in the previous activity?)
- How could we tweak/modify this product/tool to better meet your biodiversity information needs?
- What do you see as the primary barrier to using this product/tool?

Feedback was recorded by participants on sheets of coloured paper, with a different colour representing each station. The World Café session lasted about 50 minutes, and facilitators gathered the papers at the end of the session to ensure no responses were lost.

C) Next steps group discussion

Following the World Café, participants came back together for a 20-minute discussion about possible next steps the ABMI could take to better engage with the agriculture industry. The facilitators encouraged participants to think about their most immediate needs to inform the discussion

D) Closing

For the final moments of the workshop, ABMI staff thanked participants for their engaged attendance. Facilitators announced that pre-workshop survey results and a workshop summary would be shared as soon as completed.

5.0 Workshop summary

Feedback from each of the participant activities was synthesized and evaluated to draw out common themes under the banners of “Needs” and “Challenges.”

In addition, feedback on new and emerging ABMI products was tabulated (see below).

5.1 Needs

The “Needs” identified during the workshop fell into three broad themes:

- Collaboration
- GIS and monitoring information; and
- Communication

The data that make up these themes have been provided in brief in Table 1 – Summary of Needs.

Collaboration

Participants indicated interest in future collaborations with the ABMI, including by working with the Ecosystem Services Assessment (ESA) project to demonstrate social license within the agriculture sector.

GIS and monitoring information

For producers to be able to use ABMI products and tools for analysis and support, information needs to be available at a higher resolution—ideally for each quarter section. Attendees also suggested the ABMI begin collecting information about soil health as a proxy for ecosystem services, and to provide more granular information within the Human Footprint Inventory about the nature of various types of agricultural operations.

Communication

Participants suggested the ABMI work to demonstrate the value of preserving ecosystems within agriculture operations by speaking at AGMs, presenting at trade shows, and preparing short blog posts that are easily shared. Using focus groups to tailor presentation content was suggested as a way to develop effective messaging for producers. A need for increasing the frequency of outreach between the ABMI and agricultural groups to at minimum every six months was also expressed.

5.2 Challenges

Based on participant responses, challenges to meeting biodiversity data needs fell into two broad themes:

- Producer engagement
- Confidentiality

The data that make up these themes have been provided in brief in Table 2 – Summary of Challenges.

Producer engagement

Participants felt that they had not succeeded in providing effective extension services to producers to encourage them to think regionally and beyond productivity as the only measure of success. They suggested producers typically focus on local impacts of operations, infrequently consider the regional

perspective, and have low awareness about the potential of biodiversity information to support their operations. Workshop participants discussed the challenges associated with finding effective means of outreach for producers, and suggested avoiding information overload in the ABMI's future outreach efforts.

Confidentiality

Developing collaborations with other groups, such as Cows and Fish and Growing Forward, was discussed; however, data confidentiality issues may create a barrier to their creation. Additionally, participants indicated confidentiality as a concern for emerging ABMI products, such as WildTrax and NatureLynx.

5.3 ABMI emerging products – Innovation

Participants provided feedback on five new and emerging products in the World Café. Below, we have summarized the feedback for each product:

1. Enhancing regional monitoring: WildTrax

Only one participant left feedback at this station. This participant stated that WildTrax would be a useful tool to “entice producers into understanding ecosystem services and participating in increasing supply [of ecosystem services].” Internet speed and the possibly cost-prohibitive nature of camera traps are potential barriers to uptake of this product.

2. From citizens to institutions: building a biodiversity network

Participants felt they could use NatureLynx as a tool for producer engagement at AGMs and tradeshow, collaborations with WPACs, and for building biodiversity inventories. Respondents suggested finding a way to incentivize and gamify the app to encourage uptake, and to find a way to incorporate the pasture app.

3. Geospatial innovations

Although respondents indicated the resolution of data would need to be to the quarter section before it is functional for their purposes, they were very interested in the geospatial products under development. In addition to preexisting data, they were looking for the inclusion of wetland classification levels, and soil moisture information.

4. Knowledge translation

The Mapping Portal was very well received by participants who said it “could be very useful: we have a lack of capacity to work with data for our needs.” They suggested developing one-page case study documents for circulation within the industry. One participant commented “can ABMI connect with industry association managers to introduce them to all these tools discussed today?”

5. Ecosystem Services Assessment

Discussion throughout the day often revolved around the ESA, and its possible role in capturing the environmental stewardship activities of agricultural producers within the market. The scale of resolution needs to be improved to the quarter section for this tool to work effectively for producers, and participants are concerned policy barriers may get in the way of broad-scale buy-in.

6.0 Moving Forward

Throughout the session, conversations highlighted areas where the ABMI can invest effort to continue to meet the needs of the agriculture industry in Alberta. Results of the workshop will be incorporated into the Stakeholder Needs Assessment Report, and used by the 10-year Review Steering Committee to develop a series of recommendations for the ABMI Board of Directors. The Board of Directors will use these recommendations to make decisions about ABMI operations going forward. Your feedback is invaluable in helping to shape the ABMI's next ten years of operations. Thank you.

Theme	Data
<p style="text-align: center;">Collaboration</p>	<p>State of Biodiversity reports; Ecosystem services assessments; Understanding the impacts of neonicotinoids; ABMI collaborations with other organizations like Cows and Fish and Growing Forward.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Communication</p>	<p>Website needs to be easier to navigate; Frequent outreach; Presentations at AGMs; Presence at tradeshowes; Curated content targeted to agriculture, i.e., blogs and short articles; Be careful that messaging does not make agriculture feel under attack; Make clear who appropriate points of contact are; Perform more producer engagement; Demonstrate the value of understanding ecosystem services.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">GIS and Monitoring Information</p>	<p>Information needs to be available to the quarter-section; Need tools to be easy to use; Consider using soil health as a proxy for ecosystem services; Human Footprint Inventory should have more information about variability within agriculture operations; Watershed and riparian management outcomes.</p>

Table 1 Summary of needs

Theme	Data
Confidentiality	Confidentiality of reports produced by other potential collaborators; Producer/landowner confidentiality concerns over using and recording data/observations in NatureLynx and Wildtrax.
Producer Engagement	Scale of focus (producers focus locally, not often regionally); Finding appropriate incentives; Producers currently focus on productivity as main measure of success; Effective engagement will be a long process; Low awareness of potential with biodiversity information; If awareness is not increased with producers, they could get trapped by regulation; Only a handful of producers currently include ecosystem services in their decision-making matrix.

Table 2 Summary of challenges

Appendix 1 – Workshop attendees

Appendix 2 – Workshop notes

Appendix 3 – Workshop evaluation forms

Appendix 4 – Pre-workshop survey results

Appendix 5 – Workshop presentations

Appendix 6 – Workshop information package