

Friends of Leduc Area Greenspace *Changes Recommended To Leduc County Draft Land Use Bylaw*

The Friends of Leduc Area Greenspace (FLAG) is a citizens' coalition opposing a proposal to repeal existing Leduc County protections for environmentally sensitive areas of the County. We are referring to the Leduc County Draft Land Use Bylaw, which is the subject of a public hearing on August 28, 2006 and comes before Leduc County Council in early September 2006 for approval.

Herein, we will make recommendations that will improve the Leduc County Draft Land Use Bylaw May 2006 version.

Recommendation Summary:

1. The timing for: the release of this draft land use bylaw, the public sessions, and proposed approval are all too short and at the worst possible time of the year. At a minimum, there needs to be an extension to allow for all stakeholders to be heard.
2. Don't paint land with varying degrees of environmental sensitivity/significance with the same brush. Two or three different conservation-oriented land use districts are needed to provide differing levels of protection to make those who care about the land and those who work the land agree to the protections.
3. Share the data that resulted in land being designated environmentally sensitive/significant or not so that people can understand the reasoning behind the land use district choices.
4. Involve environmental stakeholders in the crafting of the next draft so that what is released is mutually agreeable.

RESPECT FOR PEOPLE'S TIMETABLES AND THOSE OF NEIGHBORING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

We are very concerned with the timing of the release of the May 2006 version. The entire process of public/neighboring county notification & input has been timed to occur during the

busy summer months of July and August when most people don't have the time or energy to deal with land use bylaw issues. Given the short notice we do not feel that any neighboring counties and municipalities will be able to perform a reasonable review of the Draft Land Use Bylaw in order to offer their input.

There should be an extension to the time given to the people of Leduc, neighboring counties and municipalities, and all other stakeholders so that all concerned can respond after being given reasonable time to truly understand the issue and carefully formulate their opinions.

We feel that the creation and approval of a new land use bylaw is one of the largest and longest lasting effects that a particular Council can have on its municipality. The last time the land use bylaw was changed, it stood for 23 years and counting! With this in mind, what is the rush?

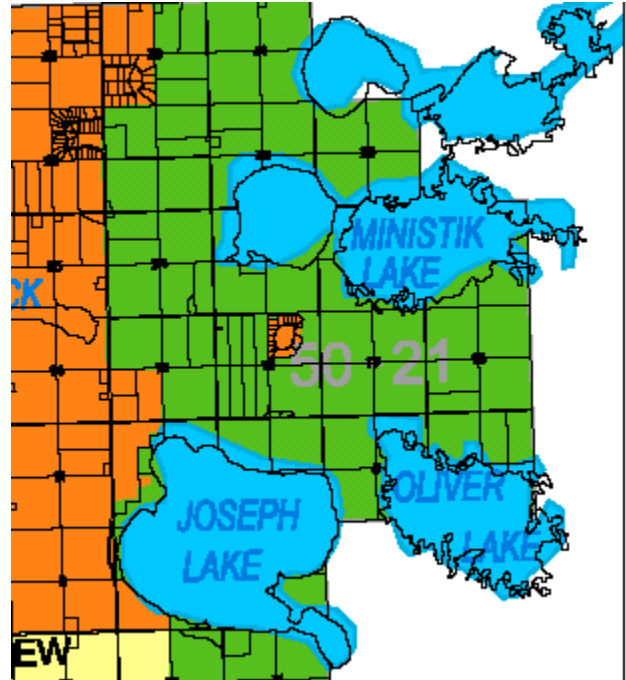
DIFFERENT LAND USE DISTRICTS FOR LAND OF DIFFERING SENSITIVITY OR SIGNIFICANCE

Our primary draft land use bylaw change recommendation is that there should be two or three different land use districts used for environmentally sensitive land. The most sensitive and significant land, for example the Ministik area and North Saskatchewan River Valley, should be carefully protected. The land use designation for these areas should be clearly protective and not include either permitted or discretionary uses that could do harm. Environmental impact studies, development conditions to protect features, and countywide public input on development requests (that administration desires to allow) should all be **REQUIRED** for the most sensitive and significant land. These lands should be clearly detailed in the land use bylaw as being zero impact development zones. County administration must back up that intent. An example of what we are trying to avoid is a repeat of whatever happened to allow a country residential development in the middle of the Ministik area (picture follows at the top of the next page.)

Land that is environmentally important but has a low degree of sensitivity and significance can be designated in a land use district that ensures its reasonable protection but still allows for uses that will not harm the land.

How is the determination of degree of environmental significance and sensitivity made? Parkland County, for example, recently completed a study identifying which land was environmentally significant and the degree of significance: provincial, regional,

and local. The provincially significant areas were buffers around the large lakes, the entire North Saskatchewan River Valley with buffers ranging from ½ mile to 4 miles depending on the features in the surrounding area, the Pembina River Valley, and the Wagner Natural Area and surrounding forest.



PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE DATA USED TO DETERMINE THE SENSITIVITY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF LAND

We feel that the public will be more accepting of environmental sensitivity and significance designations if they have reasonable access to the data behind the decisions. The public will also then be able to identify areas that were missed or not given the correct level of sensitivity or significance.

For example, the protected area around both Big Hay Lake and Joseph Lake is proposed to shrink by a total of over 4,000 acres. What is the data that caused this reduction?

INVOLVE ALL STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PROCESS

Instead of going back to county office backrooms to craft a draft land use bylaw that may or may not be accepted by the various stakeholders, and then throw it out to see what sort of furor can be generated, we recommend that you return the Draft Land Use Bylaw to Leduc County administration for an overhaul. An environmental overhaul needs to be done in cooperation with such environmental stakeholders as the residents of Leduc County, Leduc County's own Environmental Committee, the Alberta Wildlife Federation, and the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance.

We suggest that an environmental overhaul committee be formed with representation from all environmental stakeholders. That committee would be responsible for making specific recommendations to County administration and Council about changes to the Draft Land Use Bylaw that would make it at least acceptable to the majority of the stakeholders. Since we understand that administration and Council desire to end this multi-year voyage soon, a reasonable deadline could be set for the committee's recommendations.

CLOSING

We thank you for investing your time in reading these recommendations!

Our hope is that Leduc County will have heard the concerns that FLAG and others have voicing and, at a minimum, extend the time for public input. In reality, we desire that the draft land use bylaw undergo an environmental overhaul so that all the recommendations in this document can be followed through on.

To contact FLAG:

Email: flag@kanotech.com (preferred, as we will be able to reply quickly)

24-hour voicemail: 780-980-8101 (your call will be returned within three business days)

Web address: www.kanotech.com/flag