



# athabasca county connection

A newsletter for residents and businesses of Athabasca County

December 2014

## Road rescue contract renewed

Long term funding solution being sought for Hwy. 63

Athabasca County and the Government of Alberta (GOA) have struck an agreement to extend funding for road rescue services along Highway 63 between Grassland and Wandering River and as far north as Marianna Lakes.

The prior funding agreement, a partnership between the GOA and the County, came to an end in August 2014. It was put in place to help pay for the services of a contractor to provide road rescue services, made necessary after dedicated members of the Wandering River Volunteer Fire Department could no longer meet the volume of road rescue calls.

The new one-year agreement extends until September 2015 and is an interim solution until a larger plan for road rescue services is found.

"Recognized as one of the busiest industrial highway corridors in Alberta, Highway 63 sees those commuting to work in the oilsands and county residents mingle with increased truck traffic including wide loads," says Ron Jackson, Director of Emergency Services.

"The province has made progress in twinning Highway 63 but with no indication of traffic volumes decreasing, a road rescue service will always be a need along this stretch of highway."

Athabasca County has begun working with neighbouring municipalities and the Government of Alberta to put in place a long-term solution for road rescue services along Highway 63.

While recent statistics show the number of fatalities along Highway 63 has dropped, all partners recognize the importance of having a strategic direction for road rescue services and hope to see a long-term solution soon.



**RURAL GROWTH** - commuters making their way to busy worksites in northeastern Alberta are having a positive impact on business investment in the communities of Wandering River and Grassland. Local business people, as well as outside entrepreneurs are seeing potential in both of these communities.

## Business community growing

The continual growth of northeastern Alberta's oilsands is providing benefits to the communities that lie along commuter routes that lead to them.

Athabasca County has two communities, Wandering River and Grassland, that have experienced growth due to the increased need for commuter and commercial trucking services.

Perhaps the reason for the increased investment by the private sector is the realization that growth will only continue in the oilsands sector and customers will keep coming through their doors.

The numbers don't lie. According to Alberta Transportation numbers, Wandering River, a community of approximately 100 people has weekly traffic flows of 35,000 plus vehicles. They are made up of commuters who travel between their home communities and Fort McMurray, as well as commercial truck drivers.

Recently two franchise restaurants have established a presence in Wandering River. Not only do they offer more services to the travelling public but provide local people with more employment opportunities and dining options.

### Commercial & Industrial Permit Values

2013 Calendar Year: \$18.45 million (47 permits)

2014 Year to Date: \$67.2 million (43 permits)

\* values as of November 24, 2014

"Although a small sign, it's recognition that we are seeing growth," says County Manager Ryan Maier.

The potential for growth in Athabasca County lies in its location. With proximity to the Athabasca Oilsands area and Fort McMurray, logistical and warehousing support businesses are a great possibility. Services offered in communities are anticipated to grow along with the business sector.

"We know it's not going to happen overnight, but the hope is that we will see the number of residents grow in our hamlets as well," says Athabasca County Reeve Doris Splane.

"These communities are already established and have all the necessary infrastructure in place to see investment in terms of commercial and residential developments."

On behalf of County Council  
& all County Employees

Have a safe & happy  
Holiday Season!

# County Briefs

## 2015 seasonal camping site applications deadline

The January 2, 2015 deadline for seasonal camping applications at Forfar Recreational Park and Hope Lake Campground is drawing near.

Those wishing to submit an application can do so by downloading an application from our website or picking one up at the County office. The seasonal rate for 2015 will be \$1,750 per site. A \$50 non-refundable fee must be submitted with each application.

## Development Permits

Athabasca County Land Use Bylaw No. 6-2002 outlines what types of development are permitted and discretionary, for each of the various Land Use Districts in the County.

Prior to any development occurring in the County, ratepayers and/or developers are required to obtain a development permit and respective permits under the *Safety Codes Act*. Some of these include, Building, Electrical, Gas, Plumbing, and Private Sewage permits and can be obtained from the County Office. A Development Permit application fee is payable upon receipt of permit applications.

Athabasca County is an accredited municipality and has contracted The Inspections Group Inc. to ensure all development within the County meets the requirement of the *Safety Codes Act*.

The permitting and inspection process helps to ensure improvements made to properties within the County are safe. Any development commenced prior to the issuance of permits will result in fees being doubled.

## Planning help for community organizations

The Government of Alberta offers help to community organizations and groups in planning the path ahead.

Strategic planning is often the most important task for any organization whether it's a three year, three month or three day plan. Without a clear idea of what you are trying to achieve or focus on, your efforts can often be disorganized and may not result in the best outcome possible.

Contact the Community Development Department by email: [CommunityDevelopment@gov.ab.ca](mailto:CommunityDevelopment@gov.ab.ca)



## Blue Heron awarded for its work

Athabasca County was proud to sponsor the Employer of Persons with Disabilities Award at the 2014 Athabasca District Chamber of Commerce Business Awards Gala held recently.

Athabasca County Reeve Doris Splane presented the award to Arno Birkigt, Executive Director of Blue Heron Enterprises.

Congratulations to everyone involved with Blue Heron and all other award recipients for their success.

## The importance of underground locates

### Contacting Alberta One-Call before any digging takes place can save you some costly headaches

Legislation in Alberta states that before any digging takes place underground locates must take place to identify underground utilities.

Athabasca County's Development Department includes information about the requirement for underground locates to take place within the terms of County development permits.

Whether you are building a new fence or deck, planting a garden, or disturbing the ground on your property in any way, damage to buried utilities can lead to fatalities, personal injuries, environmental contamination, lawsuits, repairs, product losses, disruptions of essential services and evacuations.

The financial costs of repairing any damage you

cause to a buried utility will be the responsibility of you, the excavator.

### Alberta One-Call Corporation

This is a non-profit corporation that has provided a communication service between the digging community and the owners of buried facilities since 1984.

Alberta One-Call works with utility owners to arrange for the location marking of buried facilities before any ground disturbance takes place. These locates can take place on Crown land and privately owned land at no cost.

Location requests can be made over the telephone by calling 1-800-242-3447, on their website or by downloading their mobile app.

They request that you contact them at least two full working days in advance of any digging to enable the utility companies time to respond. They accept locate requests up to 14 days in advance.

## Recreational use of public and private land

Hunting season is underway and having an understanding of the rules surrounding land access can be helpful.

There are differences between land access on private land for hunting and those on agricultural public land.

According to Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, there are about five million acres of public land under agricultural lease that hunters may access.

Whether on private land or

agricultural public land, in both cases hunters first must contact the leaseholder/landowner and provide information about your visit to the land.

Although leaseholders must allow reasonable access to the land for recreation, some circumstances allow the leaseholder to deny or apply conditions to access, as specified in the Recreational Access Regulations.

If a hunter wants to access private land, the landowner may

deny you access for any reason.

The 'Use Respect Program' is an initiative of Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development and the Alberta Conservation Association.

Under the program, yellow and green signs will be placed along fences of potential hunting areas on both agricultural and private lands. The signs list the contact information of the leaseholder, landowner or designated contact person. For more info. visit: [mywildalberta.com](http://mywildalberta.com)

# County Peace Officer a community safety resource

## Education before enforcement gives everyone the chance to make the most out of life in the County

Having worked in Athabasca for several months he might be a familiar face to some, but Jeremy Oakes says he continues to learn about our County and the people who live and travel through it.

Athabasca County welcomed the new Peace Officer to his role in June 2014. Before moving to Athabasca he worked in the same capacity with Lac La Biche County.

Each time Peace Officers relocate they must be reappointed to the new jurisdiction they are working in. Oakes has been busy familiarizing himself with Athabasca County bylaws by working as a Bylaw Officer until November when an appointment by the Alberta Solicitor General's Office as a Level II Peace Officer was made.

He views his role of Peace Officer as being an educator first. This helps everyone understand the bylaws and how they pertain to each situation.

Athabasca County Enforcement Services is responsible for investigating complaints, enforcement of Municipal Bylaws and various Provincial Statutes (i.e. Traffic Safety Act, Stray Animals Act, Alberta Environment Act). The goal is to enhance public safety by patrolling residential, industrial, rural and recreational areas within the County.

Peace Officers work alongside the RCMP, Alberta Sheriffs, Fish & Wildlife, Alberta Environment, Sustainable Resources and other agencies to serve the public.

Over time Athabasca County's Peace Officers



Athabasca County welcomed Jeremy Oakes to its staff in June 2014. He worked as a bylaw officer until October when he was appointed as the County's Peace Officer.

have participated in Public Safety and Educational Programs such as: Rural Crime Watch, Selective Traffic Enforcement Programs (STEP), Child Restraint System Checks, and Off Highway Vehicle Check Stops.

On the County Bylaw side of Oakes' job, documenting any complaints can assist Athabasca County Protective Services look into issues for you. A Complaint Form is available and can be filled out for general issues that pertain to County Bylaws. By submitting an Athabasca County Barking Dog Package you create a record of how dogs are affecting your neighbourhood. Both of the forms are available for download on the County website by looking under the Services tab.

"In creating a record of your complaint in

official form you help us look into the matter and get to the root of the problem more quickly," says Oakes.

Written statements do help in allowing a Peace Officer to take enforcement action if the officer did not personally witness the infraction take place.

"Some enforcement is necessary, such as the issuance of fines, but the option for correcting a property matter, or one of a barking dog for example, is usually given in the form of a notice."

If you have any questions or concerns about municipal enforcement matters in Athabasca County please feel free to contact Enforcement Services.

**Contact: CPO Jeremy Oakes**  
cpo@athabascacounty.com

## Rural addressing signage installation in final stages



Blue rural addressing signs have been going up across Athabasca County and soon all the posts and signs will be installed.

Carmacks Enterprises was contracted by Athabasca County to conduct subsurface locates and install the signs. Due to the onset of colder temperatures, crews switched to installing sign posts only and returned later to bolt the blue addressing signs in place.

The installation of the signs was completed in late November and the project has entered a new phase. County staff and the contractor will be going back to

look at the concerns of residents that had been recorded as the project moved forward.

"With a project of this size there will always be places that we need to revisit and make decisions on how to solve them," says Bryan Hall, Rural Addressing and Regional Fire Coordinator.

"The project will be considered complete when we have addressed all these concerns and registered all the rural addressing signs with the 9-1-1 database in the region."

The primary purpose of the rural addressing signs is to mark the

main entrance to rural properties in the County. This helps emergency responders choose the right entry and reduce response times.

Residents are asked to continue using their legal land descriptions when calling in emergencies until notified by the County to switch to the new system.

Information about the numbering system can be obtained by visiting the County Office or clicking on the rural addressing link on the County website.

**Contact: Bryan Hall**  
bhall@athabascacounty.com

# Commissions, Committees and Members At Large

## Your way to contribute to the operation, growth and provision of services in Athabasca County

Athabasca County appoints residents of the municipality as members of boards and committees. Reserved specifically for residents to share their ideas and passions about various services, these positions are called 'Members At Large'.

The length of service for Members At Large appointed to various boards varies and so does the number of meetings held each year.

"It's a great way to participate in the operation, growth and provision of services in the region," says Brian Pysyk, Director of Corporate Services. "New people bring new ideas and energy with them."

One example of a committee which has Members At Large is the FCSS Advisory Board. Over the last number of years members of the committee have worked alongside County staff, and Members of Council appointed

to the board, to transition Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) into its new facility.

Each time board members, staff and members of the community enter the building today, they do so with a sense of pride.

The following is a list of the boards and committees residents of the County can participate in:

- Subdivision and Development Appeal Board;
- Family and Community Support Services;
- Athabasca Airport Committee;
- Tourism/Economic Development Committee;
- Recreational Services Board;

Members of all the above mentioned Boards are eligible for a meeting honoraria and travel expenses.

Contact: Brian Pysyk  
bpysyk@athabascacounty.com



## 2014 Farm Woman of the Year Awards

**Do you know a farm woman who makes exceptional contributions to build success?**

**Nominate her today for one of two awards:**

*Pioneer Farm Woman Award*      *Modern Farm Woman Award*

**Nomination forms are available by:**

- Visiting the Athabasca County Administration Office
- Downloading them from [www.athabascacounty.com](http://www.athabascacounty.com)
- Calling Roxanne at 780-675-2273

**Nomination deadline: January 2, 2015**

## Partnership Profile / Community Transportation Committee



A Handi-Bus is one of two vehicles in service to provide transportation to those living in the Athabasca and Boyle region.

Athabasca County, the Town of Athabasca and Village of Boyle work together to provide transportation for seniors and disabled individuals residing within the region. Together they form the Community Transportation Committee.

Contributing on a per capita basis, the partner municipalities are working to ensure transportation services are available to those who need it. Bookings can be made for medical trips, group bookings, special events, and occasional outings for senior groups.

All transportation services are provided through the operation and maintenance of a wheelchair accessible Handi-Bus and

a wheelchair accessible van. The goal of the partnership is to ensure that safe and reliable transportation services are available to our residents.

All bookings are made by calling Athabasca County and are booked on a first come, first serve basis with medical trips taking priority.

"Living in a rural area can pose some challenges for our seniors and those living with a disability," says Reeve Doris Splane.

"It is a very worthwhile investment for the County to continue supporting a service that connects people living in our region with the services they require."

**County Office**  
for general inquiries

780.675.2273 | 1.844.662.2273

**Public Works**  
road & maintenance issues

780.675.2404 | 1.844.675.2404

**After Hours Emergencies**  
safety issues evenings/weekends

780.689.9000



**Athabasca County**  
*at the centre of it all*

[www.athabascacounty.com](http://www.athabascacounty.com)

The Athabasca County Connection newsletter is produced bi-monthly and is available to every resident by mail or electronically through email or on our website.

To receive or cancel your copy call the County Administration Office at 780-675-2273 | 1-844-662-2273 or via email: [connection@athabascacounty.com](mailto:connection@athabascacounty.com)

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