

Summary

SERC 2: Natural Resources, Local Development, Social Economic Enterprises and Rural Revitalization in Alberta¹

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Preamble

Current provincial land and natural resource tenure and revenue arrangements, combined with limited local capacity to manage and develop such resources, reduces the potential for local benefits for communities adjacent to and dependent upon the fundamental natural resources of forestry and fishery. In fact, many such communities remain marginalized despite such resources (Mitchell et al. 2001).³ The research of SERC 2, has been undertaken to determine if countervailing opportunities for such communities in other natural resources sectors with respect to the sectors of non-timber forest resources, non-traditional fisheries, local and organic food systems, renewable energy, and eco-tourism existed within Alberta and B.C.

To date, Alberta based research examining the linkages between social enterprises, natural resources and rural revitalization has revealed limited if not non-existent overt or easily accessible examples of case studies that support the SERC 2 research themes. Extensive internet based research, general exploratory discussions with subject matter experts as well as government agencies and organizations have not provided substantial evidenced based research that would represent the SEE research definitions. There are some examples of “related theme or topic areas” to the SERC 2 research, mainly in the area of agricultural related cooperatives⁴.

¹ See detailed research information on Alberta rural revitalization/ rural renewal and related to urban/rural linkages and other selected socio-economic topics.

- Martin, Jerome and Brost, Les (2004) Growing the Future: Tomorrow’s Rural Alberta Prepared by for Rural Education and Development Association (REDA). <http://www.acca.coop/BridgeBuildersPhaseOne.pdf> (n.d./2007) [WWW document]. URL (<http://www.acca.coop/index.html>).
- Martin, Jerome and Brost, Les (May 2005) Final Report, Bridge Builder Project, Phase II <http://www.acca.coop/BridgeBuildersPhaseTwo.pdf> (n.d./2007) [WWW document]. URL (<http://www.acca.coop/index.html>).
- McNaughton, Noel (January 2006). Leadership Training in Rural Alberta: What’s in place, what works, what’s needed: A report for the Agricultural Submitted by: Alberta Community and Co-operative Association (ACCA) and Raven’s Eye Consulting Inc. <http://www.acca.coop/RuralLeadership.pdf> (n.d./2007) [WWW document]. URL (<http://www.acca.coop/index.html>).

² I would like to acknowledge the contributions of Billy Collins and Mary Beckie towards the collaborative research and discussions throughout the development of the Alberta SERC 2 work.

³ Most of the land in Alberta is publicly owned, therefore, access to the timber resource or energy deposits is granted through lease agreements between firms and the provincial government.

⁴ Canadian Cooperatives. Coops in Alberta. <http://www.coopscanada.coop/pdf/Sector/FactSheet/Alberta%20co-ops.pdf>

However, these initiatives are largely - “emerging” examples (new generation cooperative processing plants)⁵, rather than truly representative case studies of the identified research interests in a mature form. And, “despite the advantages of a good funding and legal climate, there remains a number of factors that adversely affect co-op development in Alberta: capitalization; promotion and awareness of the co-op model; training & education of technical service providers; start-up funding; and co-ops losing touch with their co-op roots.”⁶

It is suggested that additional primary research is required in the next steps of the SERC 2 inquiry to determine whether these preliminary findings are valid and if sector Subject Matter Experts (SME) have additional insights into the findings and direction of the SERC 2 research interests.⁷ Moreover, this exploratory research further reinforced the need to take a broader and looser look when attempting to identify what is truly reflective of a SEE within these sectors when measured against the SERC 2 definition. By expanding the analytical domain of the research, SERC 2, the project may make discoveries about the contributions of the social economy towards the reinsertion of social processes into sustainability and economic life that may not have been anticipated. Or, SEE that have emerged in other forms based on success factors or drivers unique to Alberta’s social processes of reciprocity, and solidarity towards sustainability within its economic structures (Polyani 1957, Heilbroner 1980, Perry 1987, Dale 2001).

Summary of SERC 2 Natural Resource Sector Research and Social Economy Entreprises in Alberta

The following provides a brief summary of the Alberta SERC 2 research outcomes from largely internet based sources, some SME general discussions, and the experience of the student researcher with rural Alberta community development, government, non-government agencies and organizations and the natural resources sectors.

Non-Timber Forest Products

Only one “pilot” example of a non-timber harvesting SEE in Alberta could be found on the internet - Aurora Natural Products and Essential Oils Co-operative supported by the Manning Forestry Research Fund.⁸ This initiative appears to be no longer active, however, follow up is

⁵ Rancher’s Own Meat Processors Inc. New Generation Cooperative <http://www.ranchersown.ca/>

⁶ See detailed information and analysis for Alberta. Alberta Community & Cooperatives Association; Report on Co-operative Development in Alberta (MAY 30, 2007). White Paper on Co-operative Development <http://www.acca.coop/StrategyPaper.pdf> (n.d./2007) [WWW document]. URL (<http://www.acca.coop/index.html>).

⁷ See Aupers, Wendy (2007). Summary SERC 2: Natural Resources, Local Development, Social Economic Enterprises and Rural Revitalization in Alberta Submitted by: Wendy Aupers, Graduate Student Researcher, December, 2007. Preliminary Background to Co-operatives in Alberta.

⁸ Manning Forest Fund Newsletter (Spring 2006). More to Forests products than Timber. <http://mdfpresearch.ab.ca/pdf/Spring2006.pdf> For more information, the institute’s secretariat can be reached at (780) 422-6535 or ted.szabo@gov.ab.ca. Aurora Natural Products and Essential Oils Cooperative can be reached at (780) 836-0006 or visit www.auroraessentialoils.ca.

recommended. This does not mean the potential does not exist, rather more detailed primary research and follow up with SMEs is required.⁹ Information was found which identified and described federal and provincial law and policy applicable in Alberta to the harvest, distribution, processing and ultimate consumption of non-timber forest products (NTFPs). This research describes the law and policy relating to floral and greenery products such as mosses, foliage and boughs. The research did not deal with cultivation or semi-cultivation of NTFPs but rather with wild NTFPs. Interestingly, in Alberta there is no direct regulation of NTFPs in the province.¹⁰ In contrast, B.C. has applied various detailed and extensive efforts towards NTFPs.¹¹ Limitations in applying the expected SERC 2 topics also emerged as the context for some of the research concepts simply do not exist within Alberta. For example, local non-timber harvesting activities and other sustainable forest management practices are associated with community forest models which can be found in B.C.¹² but do not exist in Alberta. Similarly, there is need for more research into the impacts on NTFPs from fire and other causes.¹³ There are private woodlots in Alberta, and there is a Woodlot Association of Alberta¹⁴ for timber harvesting on private land that seeks to encourage sustainable harvesting practices; however these private woodlots are not managed as SEE¹⁵

The structure of Alberta's forest industry and its relationship to rural communities in Alberta is important to note as SERC 2 moves forward into the next phases of research. In Alberta, the

⁹ Non-timber forest products from the Canadian boreal forest: an exploration of aboriginal opportunities Authors: Boxall P.C.; Murray G. Unterschultz J.R. Source: [Journal of Forest Economics](#), Volume 9, Number 2, August 2003 , pp. 75-96(22).

¹⁰ Non-Timber Forest Products Floral and Greenery Products Ann Hillyer and Judy Atkins (March 2005) http://www.royalroads.ca/NR/rdonlyres/A91E804F-7E30-48DB-AFD4-F494ABB8894C/0/ntfp_law_and_policy_paper_alberta_floral_products.pdf

¹¹ An Economic Strategy to Develop Non-Timber Forest Products and Services in British Columbia Forest Renewal BC Project No. PA97538-ORE Final Report (This strategy can be downloaded from http://fbminet.ca/bc/commod/special_crops.htm) Russel M. Wills and Richard G. Lipsey Cognetics International Research Inc. 579 Berry Road, Cates Hill Bowen Island, British Columbia V0N 1G0 tel. 604-9470271 fax: 604-9470270 email: rmw@idmail.com rlipsey@sfu.ca (March 15, 1999).

¹² British Columbia Community Forest Association <http://www.bccfa.ca/resources.php#communityworld>

- Directory of Community Forests in British Columbia <http://denmanis.bc.ca/directory/#about> The directory uses an inclusive definition of 'Community Forestry' and aims to include information about forestry initiatives in British Columbia that substantially serve local community interests and values. The directory provide detailed description of community forestry operations and projects.

¹³ Natural Resources Canada. Mushroom research follows in wake of province's wildfires [Information Forestry August 2004](#) <http://scf-cfs.rncan-nrcan.gc.ca/news/74>

¹⁴ Woodlot Association of Alberta <http://www.woodlot.org/history.htm> In the early 1990's logging on private lands across Alberta was rampant. Fueled by unprecedented commodity prices, private timber was being bought, sold and harvested at a rate never seen before. Landowners were being cheated and the landscape was drastically altered. Originating in Cochrane, Alberta a group of concerned Albertans set out to try to address the destruction. Through the support of the Canadian Forest Service and the Alberta Government, the Woodlot Association of Alberta was established in 1995. Since its establishment, the Association has grown in membership and influence, and has become a significant voice for private land forestry and sustainable woodlot management within Alberta.

¹⁵ Alberta Woodlot Extension Program [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa3312=Alberta Woodlot Inventory Map](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa3312=Alberta%20Woodlot%20Inventory%20Map) [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa3327](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa3327)

forest products industry is the third largest manufacturing sector – behind only energy and agriculture. Alberta forest products companies operate all across the Province, in the forested area called the “Green Zone”, which encompasses over 60 per cent of the province. The land mass is 38 million hectares, or 94 million acres, in size.¹⁶ Alberta’s forest product industry is a major economic contributor in about 50 towns and cities across the province, with 12 communities considered forestry dependent.¹⁷ Forest companies spend more than \$2 billion each year, much of it in the communities they work in or near; to keep their operations going. It would be of interest to SERC 2 to examine its research in SEE from a NTFP perspective with perhaps a concentration on the 12 communities considered to be forest dependent. More research is also needed directly with the Alberta Forest Product Association to determine the extent to which NTFP and sources of information that can be examined beyond what has been accessed through internet based research.

There were some examples of First Nations traditional timber harvesting SEE in the form of community development corporation set up in partnership with Alberta-Pacific (ALPAC).¹⁸ The communities involved included the Bigstone Cree Nation, a First Nation located near the community of Wabasca as well as the Chipewyan Prairie First Nation and Heart Lake First Nation.¹⁹ Bigstone Forestry’s ownership is a limited partnership structure, representing all the communities that comprise the Bigstone Cree nation. Overall management policy is set by a board consisting of three band members, two members from Al-Pac, one member from Weyerhaeuser and a neutral chairperson. All earnings are paid in the form of dividends to the aboriginal limited partners of the company through two government-registered trusts, the Evergreen Society and the Elder’s Society. The Elder’s Society directs where dividends should be allocated for the social and economic benefit of the entire Nation. For the purposes of SERC 2 it would be of use to investigate how monies derived from this partnership have supported other community initiatives. Community development corporations within a First Nations context have become broad forms of SEE but depending on their purpose and economic activity they may have intentions and perform more like traditional business enterprises.²⁰ Additional follow up

¹⁶ Alberta Forest Product Association <http://www.albertaforestproducts.ca/home/default.aspx?id=138>

¹⁷ Alberta Forest Product Association. Alberta Communities that Rely on the Forest Industry Sources: KPMG and Canadian Forest Service circa 1999
http://www.albertaforestproducts.ca/document_library/communities.pdf

¹⁸ Also See Little Red River Cree Nation - Tallcree First Nation Co-Management Agreement: Working Towards Self-Sufficiency http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/ep/envir3_e.html This Cooperative Agreement example of the Little Red River Cree Nation (LRRCN) and Tallcree First Nation provides insights into how these communities are working to regain control over their traditional lands in northern Alberta. These First Nations want to protect the environment, create long-term employment, preserve important cultural sites, and become economically self-sufficient by developing a sustainable forest-based economy. In 1995, the two First Nations signed a Cooperative Management Agreement (CMA) with High Level Forest Products, a private company, and the provincial and federal governments.

¹⁹ *Logging and Sawmilling Journal*, April 2003 http://www.forestnet.com/archives/April_03/logging.htm

²⁰ National Aboriginal Forestry Association. Aboriginal-Forest Sector Partnerships: Lessons For Future Collaboration A Joint Study by: The National Aboriginal Forestry Association and The Institute On Governance June 2000. <http://www.nafaforestry.org/nafaiog/nafaiog3.php> This web-based resource provides extensive and detailed information about range of forestry based community social economy enterprises.

with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) may reveal more First Nations examples of resources based SEE. However, the SERC 2 team should determine whether or not First Nations SEE will be a more formal part of the study and identify a process with perhaps a specific questionnaire before proceeding with an inquiry into First Nations SEE.²¹

Land Trusts

The primary focus for existing and emerging land trust in Alberta have been for the preservation, protection and conservation of landscapes representing agricultural, natural, heritage, scenic, and recreational values.²² Land has typically been protected through conservation easements or donations towards the support of education, recreation and other forms of non-impact uses and recreation. Unlike examples elsewhere (Co-op Farmland Trust in California)²³ land trusts in Alberta have not emerged as functioning within a local economy or rural revitalization context.²⁴ However, it could be argued, in general since land is being preserved for the common good, it reflects perhaps some of the aspects of the foundations of SEE. Within a broad definition of future SERC 2 research this argument could be explored further.

There is however, a long history of formal and informal land stewardship within the Alberta ranching and farming communities. As “social economies”, these relationship of people, community and landscapes have sustained rural Alberta through various economic and environmental impacts (e.g., BSE, droughts, pest infestations etc.). It has only been recently, that this form of social economy has been more formalized in response to environmental issues, urban growth and sprawl as well as a means to preserve and protect livelihoods and a way of rural life.²⁵ Two examples, provide some insights into how SEE, in the form of land trusts, may be further explored.

The Southern Alberta Land Trust Society (SALTS)²⁶ is a locally-based, rancher-driven, nonprofit organization with registered charity status, that is dedicated to preserving the

²¹ See Aupers, Wendy (2007). SERC 2: Natural Resources, Local Development, Social Economic Enterprises and Rural Revitalization in Alberta. Submitted by: Wendy Aupers, Graduate Student Researcher, December, 2007. Draft Overview of First Nation Co-operatives in Canada.

²² See Alberta Land Trust Alliance http://www3.gov.ab.ca/env/land/land_trust/index.html

²³ The Co-op Farmland Trust in California <http://farmlandtrust.coop/farmcoop/wrap.php?about.html> The origins of this Co-op Farmland Trust are deeply embedded within the history of the new wave of food cooperatives that began in the 1960. For almost four decades food cooperatives in California have had a close connection to the land. Also see Brushett, Lynda A. "Examining the Role of Social Capital in Community Development: How the Creation of a Land Trust Set a Small Town on the Path to Sustainability." PhD Dissertation, University of New Hampshire, 2004. 196 pp. Case study of the land use planning history of a small town in Vermont, 1960s–2000s, examining theoretical constructs of social capital and sustainable community development through the lens of lived experience.

²⁴ Edmonton Land Trust Draft Business Plan <http://www.legacylands.ca/content/EdmontonLandTrust.pdf> Provides a detailed discussion on preservation and protection of prime agricultural lands in the Edmonton area.

²⁵ Alberta Sustainable Resource Development – Community Pastures. Grazing Cooperatives/Associations and Grazing Reserves <http://www.srd.gov.ab.ca/lands/formspublications/aboutpublicland/communitypastures.aspx#coop> Foothills Forage Association <http://www.foothillsforage.com/about.shtml>

²⁶ Southern Alberta Land Trust Society <http://www.salts-landtrust.org/>

ecological, productive, scenic and cultural values of Alberta's Eastern Slopes, prairie and foothill regions. SALTS was organized with the belief that the most effective and lasting conservation solutions both originate and are maintained at the community level through empowering individuals with the necessary tools and vision. The Pekisko Group²⁷ is an association of many families bound together by the common vision of a healthy and prosperous future for all people in southern Alberta. These two land trust groups see themselves as stewards of a land shaped by glaciers and thousands of years of rolling grasses and grazing buffalo. The land they oversee generates sustainable fresh water, clean air, and economic benefit for Albertans. Some of this land being conserved through rancher stewardship has been in the same family for several generations and over one-hundred years. Other land in grazing areas is leased. However, the land whether deeded or leased is managed under a collective visions of sustainability of native grasslands.²⁸ Traditionally, Albertans valued public rangelands as important sources of forage for the livestock industry. However, scientific, social and economic studies have identified healthy public rangeland provides other ecological goods and services. Alberta's rangelands provide important contributions towards, watershed functions, carbon sequestration, maintaining bio-diversity, habitat for species at risk, aesthetics, tourism and recreation. For the research interests of SERC 2, additional topics associated with ecological services and rural communities may emerge as relevant study outcomes.²⁹

Fisheries³⁰

²⁷ The Pekisko Group <http://www.pekisko.ca/pkabout.html>

²⁸ Grazing Lease Stewardship Code of Practice (December 14, 2007). Alberta Sustainable Resource Development. Alberta Beef Producers, Alberta Grazing Leaseholders Association and Western Stock Growers Association in cooperation with the Alberta Government developed a Grazing Lease Stewardship Code of Practice. Historically, Alberta's livestock producers have carried out various aspects of stewardship on grazing leases on public land, but up until now leaseholder stewardship requirements had not been consolidated in one document supported by the beef industry. *The Grazing Lease Stewardship Code of Practice* identifies the roles and responsibilities that public land grazing leaseholders have towards resource stewardship.

• Alberta Beef Producers. Grazing During Drought <http://www.albertabeef.org/environment.html>

²⁹ The Lay of the Land: An Inventory of Federal and Provincial Land Stewardship Policy in Western Canada (May 2007). Geneva Rae, Policy Analyst and Bethany Beale, Intern. http://www.cwf.ca/V2/files/Lay_of_the_Land.pdf

• Southern Alberta Ecological Study. http://www.salts-landtrust.org/sfs/sfs_description.html

• Introduction to an Inventory of the Ecological Services Provided by Ranchers and Farmers in the Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve (July and August 2002) Céline BONNEL and Olivier GARRIGOU Ecole Nationale du Génie Rural, des Eaux et des Forêts Redberry. Lake Biosphere Reserve Committee. http://www.redberrylake.ca/images/Ecological_Services_Report.pdf

• Alternate Land Use Demonstration in the County of Vermillion Lake, Alberta. <http://www.whc.org/EN/grant/07-08/ProjectVermilionRiverAlberta.htm>

• Canada West Foundation. Learning From the Australian Experience Market-Based Instruments for Ecological Goods and Services (August 2007). Geneva Rae Policy Analyst. <http://www.cwf.ca/V2/files/MBIs.pdf>

³⁰ Commercial Fishing In Alberta. Alberta Sustainable Resource Development <http://www.srd.alberta.ca/fishwildlife/fishingalberta/commercialfishing.aspx>

• Métis Harvesting in Alberta, 2007 (July 10, 2007). Alberta Sustainable Resource Development. <http://www.srd.alberta.ca/fishwildlife/fishingalberta/fishingnews.aspx#MetisFishing>

Alberta does have a commercial freshwater fishing industry, but it is very small compared to the province's billion-dollar beef business, or to Canada's \$2 billion-plus fishery with an aquaculture sector alone worth more than \$500 million.³¹ Compared to other Provincial natural resource sectors and the rest of Canada's freshwater fisheries, Alberta's commercial fisheries enterprises function more like cottage industries.³² Canadian freshwater fish sales totaled \$60.3 million in 2003/2004, with Alberta³³ providing a little less than 10% of the total sales (Canada's Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation (FFMC)).³⁴ In 2004, freshwater fishers in Canada were paid \$34.9 million by the FFMC. Alberta fishers receive a reasonable return with individual earnings of up to \$40,000 (for approximately 4-5 months of work), although there are no yearly guarantees.

In Alberta, the industry is strongest in the north around Lesser Slave Lake and Utikuma Lake. Together, these lakes provide more than half of the province's core whitefish catch. There are also strong fishery at Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabasca, and on a number of smaller lakes and irrigation reservoirs scattered throughout southern Alberta. Alberta also produces whitefish roe, or golden caviar, which is processed in a FFMC plant in Jousard and sold exclusively through brokers to cruise and ferry lines in the Baltics. Golden caviar is a value-added product, as a result, fishermen can make \$7.00 to \$8.00 a kilo on top of the price they receive for fish.

Using a series of fishing co-ops and small processing plants located throughout Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and northwestern Ontario, the Corporation operates like the Canadian Wheat Board purchasing, processing and exporting the majority of the freshwater fish caught in the system.³⁵ Canada's primary commercial freshwater fish, whitefish which is sold mostly in the United States, where it is further processed into fishcakes or sold into ethnic communities. Jewish centres along the eastern seaboard purchase whitefish, for instance, for Gefilte fish, a traditional dish. Other freshwater staples include walleye, pickerel and sucker.

³¹ Alberta Venture. Gone, Fishing? Alberta's small fry freshwater fishery struggles to modernize
Vol. 9 Issue 5 - June 2005 http://www.albertaventure.com/abventure_4160.html

³² The researcher was only able to briefly examine the Commercial Fisheries issues in Alberta. However, findings did reveal some interesting insights into the SERC 2 research that seeks to identify and understand the contributions of the social economy to the reinsertion of the social processes of reciprocity, solidarity, and sustainability into economic life (see, for example, Polyani 1957, Heilbroner 1980, Perry 1987, Dale 2001). Since 1987, provincial fisheries management strategies towards the recovery, conservation and sustainability of stabilizing fisheries resources has led to the increases in regulatory frameworks, quotas and reducing the number of commercial fish licenses through compensation programs etc. In response, the fishermen and the Alberta Commercial Fisherman's Association have organized to produce a business plan that seeks to develop the sector beyond a cottage industry.

³³ Alberta has about 1,000 lakes, about 80 or so that we actually fish in. Saskatchewan has over 9,000 lakes. Manitoba has over 100,000 lakes.

³⁴ Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. <http://www.freshwaterfish.com/enter.htm> The FFMC is a 36-year-old Crown corporation that buys, processes and markets freshwater fish from Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, the Northwest Territories and parts of northwestern Ontario. The purpose of the Corporation is to stabilize the industry and to offer prices at the start of the season so the fisherman can make decisions based on concrete numbers.

³⁵ For details about Alberta's coop processing locations see Agricultural Processing Industry
<http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/app68/foodindustry?section=category&cat1=Fish>

Unlike the Canadian Wheat Board, the FFMC also allows fishermen to sell their fish outside the system. Approximately 80% of Alberta's fishers sell to the FFMC. Fishermen can sell fish fresh to individual buyers out of their boat, but only for your personal consumption. Only FFMC licensed brokers, such as Wayne Wood's Fresh Fish in Edmonton, can resell the fish to restaurants or retail outlets. Fishermen can sell fish to restaurants or retail stores, but this requires a special FFMC dealer license. To meet consumer demand, Wayne Wood's buys fish directly from fishermen and from the FFMC.

Commercial fishing seasons and quotas are set by the Alberta government, with seasons varying widely from lake to lake. The 10 to 12-day season for the east-end of Lesser Slave Lake is in the spring, for example, with a 15-day season for the west-end of the lake is in October. Fisherman are also told how deep they can lower their nets, and how far offshore they have to be. Quotas are tight and strictly enforced. The priorities for Alberta's fisheries management is first placed on conservation, second is the domestic food fishery (the few people who fish primarily for subsistence because of isolation and no access to other sources of food), followed by sport fishing and commercial fishing. Annual province-wide Fisheries Roundtables conducted by Provincial fisheries management staff and biologists solicit input and feedback from stakeholders, including the Alberta Commercial Fishermen's Association, to further help set priorities and evaluate management strategies.

Since 1987, the provincial government has introduced various policies in an effort to reduce the number of fishermen on Alberta lakes. In 1987, there were 4,800 licensed commercial fishermen in Alberta. The number of nets per fishermen varied. Some fished in only one lake for one day, and some fished in every lake in their zone until the season ended. In 2005, there were 232 licensed commercial fishermen in Alberta and the province hopes to decrease that further to about 185. More restrictions on licensing have been applied, license fees were increased from \$75 to \$500, and a compensation program was introduced to enable fishermen to apply for government for buyouts so they could leave the industry. The strategies of the Provincial government focus on developing a more business-related, and a more economical fishery for the fishermen who are active in the sector and to give them a larger share of the pie. Strategies also provide better lake-to-lake management with licensing and determining which fishers will be active. Fishermen are working towards improving the sustainability and viability of the industry by changing the business philosophy of their industry.³⁶ A three-year business plan with strategies for marketing, boat and ice safety, food handling, communication, monitoring, and ethics has been developed, all with the goal of transforming traditional fishing into more of a sustainable industry. The aims of the new way forward means communicating and planning with all stakeholder involved from fishermen to marketers, sellers and processors, and seeking to build something bigger than a cottage industry that has been just harvesting on lakes.

Alberta provincial fisheries does provide for First Nations Treaty rights and access to the resource for traditional foods. For example, the Walleye fisheries in Lesser Slave Lakes supports an annual sport anglers harvest of approximately 65%, commercial fishermen harvest 30%, and

³⁶ The Alberta GPI Accounts: Fish and Wildlife. Report # 22 by Mary Griffiths, Sara Wilson, Mark Anielski (September 2001). http://pubs.pembina.org/reports/22_fish_and_wildlife.pdf Provides significant research information on the status and future of Alberta's commercial fisheries and its economic value.

domestic subsistence net fishermen harvest 5%. Unlike B.C. and parts of Eastern Canada, Alberta does support First Nations fisheries SEE. To date, there are also no federal fisheries programs to support the development of Alberta First Nation's fisheries projects.³⁷

Local and Organic Food Systems³⁸

Given continually increasing energy prices and limited fossil fuel reserves (Heinberg 2003), emerging interest in bio-regionalism, and concerns about health and safety of food products from an increasingly industrialized and globalized food system, there is growing interest in the development of local food systems (production, processing, marketing, distribution, and retailing). Within SERC 2 the research goal was to determine if SEE existed within local and organic food systems in Alberta and if additional opportunities existed to support capacity for SEE (Miewald et al. 2003). Moreover, do the practices of a social enterprise offer a special opportunity in this situation for local food systems for long-term food security? Here the research in the other two SERCs can be relevant as we ask how the social economy can be led, organized, networked, and structured to take advantage of such opportunities. In general, can social enterprise contribute to greater local self-sufficiency and effective action on market changes with regard to source and quality of products derived from natural resources?

There are examples of traditional agricultural cooperatives and associations³⁹ as well as new generation cooperatives that have formed to provide more cost effective processing, land and forage management and distribution mechanisms.⁴⁰ However, new generation cooperatives are emerging and require more primary research to determine the research interests of SERC 2.

Food security does have a voice in Alberta⁴¹ and a number of examples of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiatives can be found in Alberta.⁴² Outlets and points of

³⁷ Government of Canada. Canada Business : Alberta Aboriginal Business Network
http://www.canadabusiness.ca/servlet/ContentServer?cid=1105444469497&pagename=ABSN_AB%2FCBSC_WebPage%2FCBSC_WebPage_Temp&c=CBSC_WebPage

³⁸ Also See Aupers, Wendy (2007). SERC 2: Natural Resources, Local Development, Social Economic Enterprises and Rural Revitalization in Alberta. Submitted by: Wendy Aupers, Graduate Student Researcher (December 2007). Summary of Local and Organic Food Systems in Alberta and a Case Study-of Farmer Direct Co-operative Ltd.

³⁹ Profile of Canadian Agriculture Co-operatives (1986-2000) *Heather McNeill and Albert Daoust Co-operatives Secretariat, Government of Canada March 2003* http://coop.gc.ca/index_e.php?s1=pub&page=coop_86-00

⁴⁰ Government of Canada. Cooperative Secretariat. Co-operatives and the Social Economy *Prepared by The Co-operatives Secretariat Government of Canada March 2004*
http://coop.gc.ca/index_e.php?s1=pub&page=soc

⁴¹ Growing Food Security Alberta <http://www.foodsecurityalberta.ca/content.asp?RootID=2&CatID=2>

⁴² See Detailed Information -Environmental Research and Study Centre
<http://www.ualberta.ca/ERSC/Handbook/section4/purchase.htm>

- Organic Consumers <http://www.organicconsumers.org/linkpage.cfm?memid=16196>
- Blue Mountain BioDynamics <http://members.shaw.ca/bluemtnbio-dynamics/csainfo.htm>
- Sparrow's Nest Organics <http://www.organicconsumers.org/linkpage.cfm?memid=5818>
- City Farm-Edmonton <http://www.city-farm.org/>

distribution are largely through farmers markets, at the farm gate and some specialty organic health food stores. These arrangements appear to be more structured as direct sales or marketing strategies rather than as SEE that represent the SERC 2 definition.⁴³ For a more detailed explanation of direct marketing strategies considered under the terms cooperative marketing, market stands, agri-tourism, farmer's markets, community supported agriculture, restaurant sales, and e-commerce see the case study work completed on 13 farms across Canada.⁴⁴

This is not to say that the potential for SEE within the local and organic food systems does not exist within alternative agricultural markets in Alberta. In 2004, the Ag-Entrepreneurship Division undertook a study that qualified the value and determined the potential growth, of Farmers' Markets, Farm Direct Marketing, Ag Tourism and Regional Cuisine markets in Alberta. The value of all four of these alternative markets in 2004 were \$964 million annually with Farmers' Markets being valued at \$232 million annually. It was suggested that these alternative agriculture markets have the potential to nearly double in value by 2010 to \$1.7 billion. In addition to determining consumer expenditures in 2004 and market potential by 2010, the study also provided market profiles, market penetration and consumer awareness information.⁴⁵ The June 2007 research *Farm to Fork; Organics in Alberta*⁴⁶ also provides the most recent and comprehensive data available comparing Alberta's organic industry with the rest of Canada within three areas – producers and processors, the Canadian organic consumer, and a snapshot of the Canadian retail grocery industry. In 2006, the value of organic food products through Alberta grocery stores was \$48 million. Alberta also enjoys the highest growth rate in Canada at 44 percent but has the least number of certified food items (1,491).

It should be noted that the potential for local and organic food systems to develop as viable SEE and to contribute to food security is more about access to sustainable farm labour⁴⁷ and successional planning and retention of farming and ranching families,⁴⁸ rather than whether or

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- Voices of the Soil <http://www.voicesofthesoil.org/page3.html> Dine Alberta: Savour Regional Flavour
 - Dine Alberta Consumer Information [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa10857](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa10857)
 - Alberta Regional Cuisine Sourcing Directory <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/app68/dinealberta>
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[http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/All/apa8941?opendocument](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/All/apa8941?opendocument)
 - ⁴³ Alberta Farm Direct Marketing [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa549](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/apa549)
 - ⁴⁴ See of the Case Study work completed on 13 farms across Canada. Yuille Herbert. Discussion Paper Series, Number Direct Marketing in Canada http://www.crcresearch.org/files-crcresearch/File/Discussion_Paper-1_Organic_Farming_April-26.pdf
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<http://www.coopscanada.coop/newsletter/InterSector/Spring2003/index.html> Intersector Newsletter Spring 2003 (Volume 7, Number 1) Revitalizing Canada's Co-ops: Where have all the farmers gone? Bridging the Generational Divide.
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not consumers and markets can be created to increase economic opportunities. Other factors include access to and retention of affordable agricultural lands within Alberta growth management pressures.

Alternative Renewable Energy (including biofuels from agricultural crops, forestry and industrial and household waste, wind, small-scale hydro, solar, tidal).

Alberta has a long history of energy cooperatives associated with traditional electrical and natural gas cooperatives.⁴⁹ Wind energy, as a SERC 2 topic initially appeared to hold the most potential as SEE. In Canada, efforts towards models for community renewable energy are being tried by various municipalities, non-government organizations, agencies and organizations as well by various municipal governments etc. For a project to meet the definition of “community wind” it must deliver much if not all of its economic benefits to the “community”, however no clear criteria or measurement has been validated.⁵⁰ Renewable energy projects that focus on local control and management, community interests and reinvestment of profits are defined by the cooperative laws or business structures like non-for-profit corporations which government each province. Moreover the principal test of cooperative intent must also be measured by the “democratic” managerial control of one vote per investor. Even in Limited Liability Companies (LLC), a cooperative must meet the test of the company bylaws which ensures each investor has only one “community wind” project may not meet either test (cooperative one-person-one-vote control, or significant local ownership”).

There are a number of limiting factors or constraints to further development community wind or cooperative wind in Canada and specifically Alberta and British Columbia, including: 1) the right to connect to the electrical grid without undue cost; 2) a legal obligation for the priority purchase of wind energy by electric utilities; and 3) a guaranteed fair price for that energy, differentiated by the resource (Gipe, 2007).⁵¹

In Alberta, despite the 400 MW of wind operating within the province, the projects are nearly all central station plants delivering generation at transmission voltages. There is no clear activity toward community or cooperative wind at this time.⁵² However, some ranchers in Alberta have developed their own small wind installations and others have expressed an interest in doing so.⁵³

⁴⁹ Canadian Cooperatives. Coops in Alberta. <http://www.coopscanada.coop/pdf/Sector/FactSheet/Alberta%20co-ops.pdf>

- Also see Aupers, Wendy (2007). Summary SERC 2: Natural Resources, Local Development, Social Economic Enterprises and Rural Revitalization in Alberta. Submitted by: Wendy Aupers, Graduate Student Researcher (December, 2007). Preliminary Background to Co-operatives in Alberta.

⁵⁰ According to Gipe (2007). This test may exclude some projects where the community or local landowners are offered only a few turbines for local ownership out of a group and for which they control only their own turbines, if that. To some advocates this is “community washing” where a traditional project is made to appear more community oriented than it might otherwise be.

⁵¹ For comprehensive information on community wind energy and various technical documents and research see Paul Gipe, Wind-Works <http://www.wind-works.org/>

⁵² As cited in (Gipe 2007) Michele Aasgard, Alberta Community & Co-operative Association, maasgard@acca.coop, 780 451 5959, March 19, 2007.

⁵³ As cited in (Gipe 2007). Several used wind turbines were installed in the Pincher Creek area in the late 1980s or early 1990s under a program that paid a premium price for generation. The program was discontinued.

Development of individually owned or community owned wind turbines are stymied by the province's deregulated electricity market where low cost is the prime determinant of new generation. Contracts to sell power are available only on a bilateral arrangement or in response to a call for tender. Nevertheless, Alberta's Ministry of Agriculture and Food sponsored a BioEnergy and Biodiesel workshop April 23-24, 2007 at which on-farm wind generation was a topic⁵⁴. The presentation also included Ontario's Standard Offer Program and how Advanced Renewable Tariffs work in Germany and France⁵⁵.

With respect to commitments to wind energy there is federal and provincial support for sector development, however, the current rules and regulations prevent the development of community wind cooperatives or other forms of social economy enterprises.

Canadian Federal Government and Wind Energy⁵⁶

In Canada, both federal and provincial levels of government believe in renewable energy – and they believe in wind energy in particular. At the federal level, the Wind Power Production Incentive (WPPI) subsidizes a portion of the cost of establishing a wind farm for the first ten years. At the provincial level many targets have been set for renewable energy, which provincial utility companies are encouraged to meet.

Wind and Rural Canada⁵⁷

Rural economies tend to have traditional ties to natural resources. Over the past few years, however, industries associated with rural economies have undergone dramatic changes and resulting in a broad range of socio-economic impacts – mining, forestry, fisheries, even local farms have seen their prospects decline. Wind energy has been championed as an opportunity for rural communities, however, not necessarily in the form of municipally owned energy corporations or forms of social economy enterprises. Rather, wind energy has been largely promoted as a community-based benefit generating new tax revenue streams for local municipalities. Moreover, as a clean energy source, wind energy doesn't interfere with the activities of rural life like farming and raising cattle. The revenue from a wind farm can help preserve and protect traditional uses of rural lands from other forms of development.⁵⁸

Sinnott Farm Services installed a used 65 kW wind turbine during the 1990s on their farm near Pincher Creek, Alberta. Other ranchers in Alberta have approached the author about doing the same as recently as early 2007.

⁵⁴ Kelly Lund, Alberta Agriculture and Food, Kelly.Lund@gov.ab.ca, 780 644 1197.

⁵⁵ Paul Gipe will give the presentation on on-farm wind, Advanced Renewable Tariffs, and Ontario's Standard Offer Program.

⁵⁶ Canadian Wind Energy Association – Fact Sheet - The Wind Energy Industry – The Business of the Wind http://www.canwea.ca/images/uploads/File/NRCan_-_Fact_Sheets/9_industry.pdf

⁵⁷ Canadian Wind Energy Association – Fact Sheet - Community Benefits – Why Wind is right – right Now http://www.canwea.ca/images/uploads/File/NRCan_-_Fact_Sheets/12_community.pdf

⁵⁸ Summerview Wind Farm was developed by Vision Quest in Alberta. Located near the town of Pincher Creek, it consists of 38 Vestas wind turbines, each rated at 1.8 MW, for a total capacity of 68.4 MW – enough to power 24,000 homes. http://www.canwea.ca/images/uploads/File/Case_studies/Summerview2_-_final.pdf

Land Lease Payments⁵⁹

Wind energy is more often than not promoted to rural landowners as a means of supplementing their earnings. Farmers and ranchers can enjoy the benefits of new, low-maintenance revenue stream while reserving their traditional way of life. Landowners with good wind resources have the potential to benefit from wind energy. Land lease payments are the negotiated terms of agreement between the developer and landowner. They include specific details in the form of binding contract in which the landowner agrees to let their land be used in exchange for a percentage of wind farm revenue for a flat fee. In Alberta, land lease payments have first term agreements of 25-30 years. According to Gipe (2007), most of the good wind farm sites across Canada have been identified and secured by private sector interests.

Solar Energy

The Town of Okotoks as a rural community with a population of approximately 17,000 has a number of successful municipal solar energy projects as well as North America's first geothermal district heating sub-division. A not-for-profit corporation was established for the Drake Landing project as an administrative function for setting flat rate fees for the distribution and payment of geothermal heating produced from the solar project. It was determined that the intent of this not-for profit corporate structure was not as a SEE.⁶⁰

One interesting example of associated with alternative energy initiatives was located within the BC SERC2 examples. The Vancouver Renewable Energy Cooperative⁶¹ was established in 2004, a registered not-for-profit and workers cooperative run by a volunteer board of directors. VREC focuses on assisting homeowners, coops and organizations to install affordable renewable energy systems. The VREC sells and installs solar electrical and thermal systems and composting sanitation systems. A unique feature is the opportunities for volunteers and customers to assist with installations and learn about renewable energy systems as the result the transfer of greater knowledge, understanding and practical skills can occur within a local community context.

Bioeconomies

The term "bioeconomy" is interpreted in different ways. The OECD defines bioeconomy to be the aggregate set of economic operations in a society that use the latent value incumbent in biological products and processes to capture new growth and welfare benefits for citizens and nations.⁶² The Alberta government is committed to the diversification of the provincial economy by supporting the development of the bioeconomy. This includes promoting the

⁵⁹ Canadian Wind Energy Association – Fact Sheet - Community Benefits – Why Wind is right – right Now http://www.canwea.ca/images/uploads/File/NRCan_-_Fact_Sheets/12_community.pdf

⁶⁰ Littke, Bruce (2007). Personal Communication- Bruce Littke, Manager, Bow Valley Region. ATCO Gas, Calgary, Alberta. (403) 245-7352. Bruce.Littke@atcogas.com

⁶¹ The Vancouver Renewable Energy Cooperative <http://www.vrec.ca/AboutVREC.htm>

⁶² The Bioeconomy The Bioeconomy by Fred Gault Science, Innovation and Electronic Information Division, Statistics Canada Presented to the THECIS Club Breakfast Edmonton, February 14, 2007

province as a primary location of companies investing in the bioeconomy, and the allocation of \$239 million for a “Nine Point Bioenergy Program”.⁶³ Some insights into Alberta’s bioeconomy and emerging research can be found in *Research and Discovery: Agriculture Research and*.⁶⁴ To date, web-based research has not revealed any SEE emerging in this area.

Alberta Government Policy Support for Alternative Energy

Excerpts from the consultation process of the Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Initiative⁶⁵

What is your department mandate as it relates to alternative energy?

- **Corporate Energy Strategy Development** – developing a comprehensive energy strategy for the development of Alberta’s renewable and non-renewable energy sources and for conservation of energy use. Also, to develop recommendations to ensure the continuing effective operation of Alberta’s electricity system to meet Alberta’s growing need.
- **Environment** – to administer the Environment Protection Act and the Water
- **Rural Development Employment, Immigration and Industry** – rural development and capacity building to help communities be ready for alternative energy opportunities
- **Agri-Industry Commercialization Brand Agriculture and Food** – bio-mass utilizing forest stands mostly in northern Alberta
- **Bio-Industrial Development Branch Agriculture and Food** – funding support for bio-energy initiatives.

What barriers exist, either legislative or external to the development of alternative energy?

- With respect to bio-fuels, standards need to be created and implemented so that industry understand what the expectations are
- Potential trade barrier with B.C. where the government plans to legislate ethanol blends of 5% by 2010, ahead of the federal government plan. Also, B.C. plans to offer tax exemptions to blenders and processors, whereas Alberta plans to offer
- Large fuel retailers have business units created to address these initiatives.
- Environmental risk assessment and regulations of the EPA are based on size.

http://www.thecis.ca/cms3/userfiles/File/Feb14_07_Bioeconomy_Gault.pdf?phpMyAdmin=5f03d6cf1f8b7951677093693d4f7d69

⁶³ Alberta Oil and More <http://www.albertaoilandmore.com/Overview>

• Alberta’s None Point Bioenergy Plan <http://www.energy.gov.ab.ca/pdfs/BioE9pointPlan.pdf>

⁶⁴ Research and Discovery: Agriculture Research and Discovery in Alberta (Spring 2007).

http://www.fundingconsortium.ca/rdmag/rd07s_00.pdf

⁶⁵ Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Partnership Initiative <http://www.saaep.ca/project.php> Results and Recommendations from the Public Consultation for the Green Growth Plan Final Report of the SAAEP Advisory Committee to the Joint Boards of: Lethbridge Economic Development and South Growth Initiative (June 2007). Kerry Brown, Barbara McNeil and Karla Reesor.
<http://www.saaep.ca/SAAEPFinalReport.pdf>

- Individuals producing for their own use would probably not be required to complete an environmental assessment, however all commercial developments will be required to. Alberta Environment approval process takes from three to six
- There is a tremendous learning curve for small business and they often do not have the time or resources to research and pursue new opportunities.
- There is a lack of coordination regarding the regulatory approval process for alternative energy projects because they are so new. This results in projects being delayed for long periods of time.
- With respect to ethanol and other bio-fuels, questions around how to market the product and what interest the large retailers have in the product.

What activities and programs are in place or being developed related to alternative energy?

- Developing a comprehensive energy strategy, including standards for bio fuels
- Providing consultation to potential project developers regarding the Environmental Protection Act and the approval process
- Development of a “Community Progression Scorecard” which could be used by communities to be a self-assessment tool of their capacity to undertake alternative energies and/or projects
- Completing a feasibility study for small use bio-mass alternatives. This model might be adaptable to other technologies and projects.
- Providing assistance with basic business and marketing information and are also willing to make presentations to councils, encouraging business and communities to take leadership roles.
- Developing a nine point bio-energy plan for the province

What advice do you have for Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Partnership (SAAEP)?

- Consult with large industry participants to understand marketing barriers and solutions
- Focus on looking at small use/individual projects which can be developed faster and demonstrate results more quickly. Success in small projects may lead to successful larger scale development.
- Facilitate industry and community access to government resources and information
- Target leaders in business and the community who are interested in becoming informed and will champion new technologies⁶⁶

This project provides some interesting insights into alternative energy initiatives – worthwhile to determine if any discussions have occurred around the development of alternative energy cooperatives etc.

⁶⁶ Also see and review in more detail information. Feasibility Study Integrated Biodiesel Refinery, Crushing and Pressing Processing Plant July, 2007 Prepared for: Bfuel Canada Corp. Peter Schriber, Erik Vandist President and Director Biofuels & Renewable Energy Asset Logics Capital Management Inc. Trimark Engineering Ltd. <http://www.saaep.ca/BFuelStudy.pdf>

Alberta Policy and Support for the Social Economy

Social Enterprise Series

In response to the increasing volume of requests from clients, The Business Link, with funding from Western Economic Diversification Canada, has developed a special series of Social Enterprise guides. Non-profits, societies, charities, and co-ops are looking for new ways to diversify and this has led to incorporating business practices into their operations. This series provides information on starting a social enterprise, choosing an organizational structure, and the basic criteria of lending for social enterprises.⁶⁷

Summary of Learning Outcomes and Recommendations

Without previous mapping of the SEE in Alberta, the internet research on linkages to the identified natural resources sectors required numerous hours of “dead-end” or “lost leader” searches and reviews. This effort cannot be accurately captured as “deliverables” against the amount of time invested. It is estimated that approximately 20-25 hours per week was spent on the Alberta component of the project which also provide additional reference materials and research to the B.C. topics. Contracted time was for 15 hours.

Information that was found, namely in the area of cooperatives, has already been reported on and does not really contribute to expanding the information already known about these sectors (e.g., agricultural grazing cooperatives, new generation agricultural processing plants, existing agricultural marketing and food processing cooperatives, energy cooperatives as well as local and organic food systems, grocery stores and retailers like the Calgary Coop, UFA and Mountain Equipment Co-op). Perhaps through more critical review and reflection these findings can be further developed as case studies through specific criteria and questions that could better define SEE and selected SERC 2 themes within the context of Alberta. In addition, the Alberta Cooperative Association has already conducted various studies of urban and rural relations and made recommendations in these areas. While not necessarily natural resource based in the research designs, there is much general information and background that can be used towards insights into rural community revitalization.

Limitations in applying the expected SERC 2 topics also became evident as some of the sectors simply do not exist within Alberta; such as the non-timber forest products and other community forest management organizations which can be found in B.C. but do not exist in Alberta. There are private woodlots, but these are not managed as SEE. Eco-tourism and fisheries are also areas that do not have a strong SEE conceptual basis let alone practices within Alberta.

⁶⁷ Business Link. The Alberta Information Service Alberta Government Business Link (January 12, 2007).
http://cmsdev.cbsc.org/servlet/ContentServer?cid=1168576673754&pagename=CBSC_AB%2FCBSC_WebPage%2FCBSC_WebPage_Temp&c=CBSC_WebPage

Alternative energy which initially appeared to have the most potential, particularly wind energy, also met with unsatisfactory research findings. Wind energy cooperatives across Canada simply do not exist and biofuels and bioeconomies are also too early in their development to gain much insight from internet based information. Potential does exist, however, and the research concept as a SEE needs more critical review and reflection to determine the next steps.

Provincial policy has not been examined in detail as to enabling or limiting SEE opportunities. Internet based reference material is available. It is suggested that this topic be explored in more detail as it would at least provide for some clarity and insights into why SEE exist and are encouraged or not encouraged in Alberta etc. I do have direct access to the through my work to the provincial chair of all the Alberta Government's policy committees.

It would also be important to examine provincial natural resource policy and legislation to determine whether natural resources can be controlled, managed or co-managed within a local rural context by communities or NGOs/SEE organizations. Dispositions for public and rangelands for agricultural economies do exist, (e.g., grazing coops and associations),⁶⁸ however, it does not appear that "forest dispositions" in the form of Forest Management Agreements (FMAs) are enabled for similar communal and local level economic access and use.

There are limited natural resources within the direct control of rural communities in Alberta. The major of Alberta's rural communities and their populations are found in the "White Zone". In contrast to the forested area, - which is provincially owned and known as the "Green Zone" by provincial land managers. This is simply a jurisdictional classification that characterizes "non-agricultural lands". The Green Zone covers 53% of Alberta, of which 84% is owned by the Province, 9% by the Federal government, and 4% is privately owned. The other 47% of Alberta is classified as "White Zone", much of which is private agricultural lands and urban areas.⁶⁹ Resources often associated with the White Zone include, oil and gas, coal bed methane, grazing, recreation activities, hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing etc. Prime tourism/eco-tourism has already been assumed within provincial/national parks and historic sites. Rural communities near these sites provide accommodations, food, gasoline, tourism information services and various shopping experiences. Some site based agricultural tourism (bed and breakfasts, on farm ranch stays and visits etc.) exists but it has not emerged as a SEE. Generally, lands under the direct control of municipalities within the White Zone are not viable as SERC 2 SEE topics. It may be interesting to qualify these observations and findings in order to verify the population and resources associated with rural communities within the Green Zone and White Zone in Alberta. Similarly, the access to natural resources within the SERC 2 themes of northern and southern rural communities.

⁶⁸ Alberta Sustainable Resource Development. Community Pastures.

<http://www.srd.gov.ab.ca/lands/formspublications/aboutpublicland/communitypastures.aspx>

- In Alberta, there are approximately 85 grazing associations and grazing co-operatives holding grazing dispositions under the *Public Lands Act* on 982,000 acres, providing over 232,000 AUMs of grazing. An AUM is the amount of forage required by one Animal Unit for one month.

⁶⁹ Forest Fragmentations – Effects of Oil and Gas Activities on Alberta's Forests

http://www.beg.utexas.edu/energyecon/thinkcorner/Forest_Fragmentation_Alberta.pdf

For most of the research process to date, direction and efforts resulted in trying to make SEE SERC 2 topics “fit the findings”, even in their limited form. In some cases, it felt like a “group think” emerged towards a “belief of existence”, in an effort to satisfy the terms of research commitments. Efforts were made to create these deliverables, however, upon final analysis and reflection it would be hard to put forth a good example of a “mature” or “established” natural resource SEE in Alberta outside of what currently exists in the work already done on cooperatives through the Alberta Cooperative Association. BC appears to have more potential but again the BC Roundtable on the Social Economy report completed in 2006 appears to have covered many of the key profile success stories.⁷⁰ Although it is important to review these success stories in more detail as a number are no longer active. Perhaps a more focused approach to analyzing the community level benefits of natural resources SEE should be undertaken using criteria that seek to examine community economic development within the context of sustainability or sustainable community development. The work of Mark Anielski⁷¹ provides some interesting insights and directions in this area. It might even be of interest to determine of clusters of specific or mixed natural resources SEE exist and why there are community level or regional replication or multiplier effects etc.

Various “research tensions” (e.g., descriptions of SEE, lack of background or foundation research from previous phases, a clear research methodology and the introduction of new research topics etc.) describe and influence many positive outcomes (if you choose to do so) of the process so far within the B1 project of SERC 2. As exploratory research, this has been challenging. Results do not always measure the perceived amount of time invested in learning about SEE within Alberta and finding relevant examples. Other than covering the existing terrain of known academic researchers and writers and perhaps offering new arguments or recapitulation of this material, very little of any existing literature provided forward momentum. One could however, apply the various known concepts of the need for SEE and community analysis as to why rural communities currently are not succeeding, but this could only be done in a general way and would state much of the same rhetoric that is already known about rural communities and their economies. Much real work is needed in Alberta on rural communities in general against viable CED models (natural resource based or otherwise) including well defined and agreed to criteria associated with SEE success factors. Participatory action research at the community level beyond internet based research would reveal more insightful SEE information.

More time was spent talking and writing around “the hope for” finding a natural resources SEE topic/example than accepting the obvious that “natural resources”, SEE and revitalizing local economies within Alberta remains largely disconnected as a result of a variety of factors. This would include the dichotomy between rural communities located in Green Zones and White Zones, as well as the level of understanding and application of SEE concepts as local community

⁷⁰ B.C. A Social Economy Showcase – B.C. Stories http://ucscoop.com/uploads/687/437/BCSERStories_Fnl.pdf

- B.C. Social Economy Roundtable <http://www.ucscoop.com/ser>
- Resources of Enterprising Non-profits http://www.enterprisingnonprofits.ca/Links_Resources/
- Enterprising Non-Profits <http://www.enterprisingnonprofits.ca/home1/>
- The Innovative Rural Communities Project <http://www.innovativecommunities.ca/cover.asp>

⁷¹ Anielski Management Inc. <http://www.anielski.com/Index.html>

economic development strategies (Community Futures Initiatives have dropped SEE from their provincial strategies and shifted to an emphasis on economic diversification). There is also a lack of community organizers or practitioners working in SEE associated with natural resources sectors. It remains hard to identify and gather SEE information on natural resources sectors when the very concept is not being animated (or made real) at the community level within CED strategies in Alberta.

As a student researcher, the challenges so far have been many. Other than the pressures of continually defending or explaining the lack of deliverables and progress where the majority of the findings and materials are “thin”, the learning outcomes and experience within exploratory research and the SEE have been positive. The process of grounding awareness, understanding and knowledge about SEE in general and then seeking to become a “subject matter expert” in five different resource sectors has taken a bit longer and required efforts well beyond the 15 hours allocated weekly to the research project. This has been compound by the fact that the sectors themselves can be quite technical and influenced by multi-interdisciplinary research approaches. This causes the research itself to reveal conflicting conclusions and findings towards evidenced based outcomes (e.g., wind energy).

Time constraints and limited SME expertise about SEE within the rest of the SERC 2 team has also created periods resulting in a lack of direction or clarity on the next steps. Broad and even specific deliverables identified in the ongoing work would become derailed as the research revealed the information did not exist or providing conflicting or inconclusive information etc. In essence the research process has raised more issues than it has produced results.

The CIRIEC conference provided limited direct information associated with SEE and natural resources relate to SERC 2 but did provide some insights into broader SEE definitions and processes associated with creating and animating SEE through CED strategies etc. I found this of great interest and benefit towards academic and practical interests in the SEE field and for community development work in general. I was also able to establish a number of contacts with SME who have offered to assist with primary research and provide additional research and reports etc.

The SERC 2 research team itself still hasn't fully determined whether the project has accessed and captured the relevant literature and researchers within the field. More feedback and evaluation is needed. Moreover, any evaluation and analysis of the SEE information and linkages to natural resources still needs review and input from subject matter experts that are familiar with these sectors and can offer some level validity and reliability towards the findings etc. In other cases, SME are needed to even access some of the primary sources of information.

An update and review of leadership direction and a solid framework of inquiry for the next phases of the SERC 2 research would be beneficial.

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