

Jason Unger from the Environmental Law Centre discussed that there are two different types of disincentives when it comes to conservation. The first disincentive is monetary and the second is regulatory.

In terms of monetary disincentives in conservation, taxes are the major concern. Municipal property taxes were introduced in many cases to penalize acreage owners and reduce the desire for more acreages. There is a need to have a 3<sup>rd</sup> evaluation in terms of property taxes, to provide a low-rate tax to conservation lands, instead of having the lands be considered agricultural or country residential. The issue of property tax consistency, or knowing what the tax is like throughout the province. Conservation lands can be taxed at '0', but that is at the discretion of the municipality, and the land trust. Some land trusts, Ducks Unlimited Canada and Nature Conservancy of Canada, pay property taxes to be perceived as a good neighbour.

**ACTION:** Have ALTA work with municipalities and/or Province to determine consistencies in Property Taxes across the Province.

In Ontario, Manitoba and Barrhead, municipalities receive subsidies (~ \$0.60) for giving property tax exemptions for conservation lands. The Province provides a rebate to the municipalities where property tax exemptions have been given.

**ACTION:** Have ALTA work with Province and municipalities for an incentive or subsidy provided to the municipalities that give exemptions for conservation lands across the Province.

Income Tax receipts that are unusable are also a disincentive. In order to make the tax receipt an incentive, increasing the carry-forward period or transferring the tax receipt could be considered. The CLTA pursued the transfer of tax receipts, but there are many rules and regulations to get around allowing this to work, as well as it raises the question "are we doing it for the right reason's?"

**ACTION:** Have ALTA pursue the provincial government to increase the length of the receipt from 5 years to a longer term (i.e. 10 years).

Incentives are not consistently implied, but there is a need for them to be. Making incentives more compulsory vs. voluntary could be beneficial in terms of providing incentives. For example, Conservation Easements are voluntary, but having Transfer of Development Credits as a regulation could make them more compulsory and provide an incentive as well. In the US, Tradable Development Rights are considered voluntary, but in Florida, Maryland and Colorado it is the perception that they are voluntary, because of the incentive they provide.

Having tax credits available for industry to put land back in Conservation could also be an incentive. For example, If PetroCanada proposes wells in the Sullivan Creek area, they can pay a Conservation Trust over 50 years by taking a percentage of the cubic feet of gas from the wells that they would have received and put it into a trust as insurance. They would be paying for the opportunity costs that they are giving up and the public perception for the non-exploitation would be great, as well as the continuation of wildlife habitat. The only issue is trying to value and pay for an opportunity lost. Another example would be when Amoco gave up the mineral rights to NCC in the Whaleback, to get further recognition.

In terms of values, it is dangerous when talking about money. Some places need to be defined as being "no go" zones because of the value of the unfragmented landscape is far more valuable than the resources that lie underneath. For example, in the eastern slopes (also known as the

headwaters), having the landscape unfragmented by forcing the idea of water quantity and quality for both today and down the road could be important. The value of water is far more important than the value of gas and other resources that we are extracting. It is difficult to provide an incentive for large companies to have them leave certain areas alone, but designating them a no-go zone could be appropriate. The Province leases the rights to the Oil and Gas companies, and if they are 5 years leases, as in the foothills, you pay them back for the lease costs, not the opportunities lost.

Municipalities need to be more involved with conservation. Conservation could be seen as a public good and have everyone contribute to it, instead of certain users. A levy could be charged on certain items that would be a user-pay system to provide funding for conservation. The taxes paid by Albertans could be considered no longer acceptable as the times have changed. In the US, hunters pay a levy on ammunition and the proceeds go to waterfowl conservation – Robinson Pittman Fund. In Alberta, we have the oil and gas royalties that could go into a trust fund but with current economic times, that might not be sufficient as funds could be lost to markets.

**ACTION:** ALTA needs to come up with creative ways to provide incentives and funding for conservation.

For Watershed Management, the sale of ‘salmon’ license plates or conservation license plates could be a source of funds. This would not be sufficient to provide sole funding for conservation. There are some benefits of a tax or levy, stating that the consumer pays, but it is still considered voluntary and the source will eventually dry up as well.

The use of market forces creating certification programs to brand goods could be used. In a National Park in Italy, lands were cultivated for thousands of years. They now have a line of products from marmalade to wine that they sell to maintain park facilities. The problem is that you need to determine how much of a premium you can charge. In supermarkets, organic products are 50% more than non-organic products. Consumers are not willing to pay large sums of money for certain products. In British Columbia, The Land Conservancy has a labelling program for landowners with Conservation Easements.

The question of *WHO IS RESPONSIBLE* for conservation came up and after many discussions, the group decided that everyone is responsible for conservation. Communities will want to have more say for activities that are going on locally, so if the proposition was a community activity, the community would support it and the politicians would probably stay further back. Levies or taxes the people would pay, but there would be more politics involved. People are not involved in civil society and the use of petitions are quite time consuming and constringent. The current way Parliament is set up, cabinet is able to make changes to plans.

The Alberta Land Trust Alliance is seen by the group as a speaking body for all associated land trusts in Alberta that can tie regional initiatives to Provincial Government.

The challenge is that the not-for-profit sector has tight capacity. ALTA needs to help create the wealth before distributing it. We are all tied to other organizations and their money would go to good use.

**ACTION:** have ALTA look into setting up a Conservation Trust (fund) that would be funded by a variety of initiatives, including % of Royalties, levies, and that would be the fund that all organizations could be able to draw funds from.