

MUNICIPAL DISTRICT of

Spirit River

The Spirit of Our Soil: News, Nature, and Neighbours



in this issue:

RYCROFT RAGE

Wheatbelt Champions

REGIONAL WATER

Project Overview & Update

ANNUAL ROAD TOUR

Council evaluates key challenges

Building for Tomorrow

MD of Spirit River Unveils New Vision

On the heels of the regional G5 municipal meeting, the Municipal District of Spirit River No. 133 convened for an intensive, two-day strategic planning session on July 9 and 10, 2026. Led by facilitator Max Fritz of the Western Sky Land Trust, the session focused on a single, powerful conviction: **rural municipalities are stronger, more resilient, and more economically viable when they build the future together by collaborating with their neighbours.**

While the previous day's regional discussions, at the G5 meeting, established the foundation of community collaboration, the MD's private session shifted toward execution. Council and administration mapped out an aggressive blueprint for long-term viability focusing heavily on industrial growth, community readiness, and family attraction.

Key Themes of Discussion:

Investment Readiness and Industrial Expansion

A central pillar of the two-day session was ensuring the MD of Spirit River is "investment ready." Council discussed localized strategies to capitalize on the region's vast natural resources and agricultural footprint by clearing the path for industrial expansion.

Strategic planning highlighted that attracting mid-to-large-scale industrial players requires proactive municipal groundwork. The MD is actively prioritizing the development of robust infrastructure—such as reliable multi-municipal utilities and zoned industrial corridors—to ensure that when developers look north, Spirit River stands out as a turn-key destination. By streamlining permitting processes and establishing clear intermunicipal area structure plans, the MD aims to diversify its tax base, securing the municipality's long-term economic viability independently of provincial fluctuations.

Securing Quality of Life and Community Readiness

Economic growth, however, is only half of the equation. Fritz emphasized throughout the session that industrial expansion must directly serve the people who call the MD home.

"True community readiness means creating a place where economic success translates directly into a high quality of life for your residents," Fritz noted during the session.

Council mapped out frameworks to ensure that as industry grows, local infrastructure keeps pace. This includes continuous investment in regional safety initiatives, emergency preparedness networks, and reliable municipal services. By focusing on "community readiness" the MD is ensuring it has the capacity, housing framework, and community services capable of absorbing new workforce populations smoothly.

The Ultimate Goal: Family Attraction and Retention

To counteract rural depopulation, the strategic plan places a heavy emphasis on making the Central Peace an undeniable draw for young families.

Focus Area

Family Attraction

Strategic Action Item

Expanding recreational assets, supporting local childcare accessibility, and promoting rural quality of life.

Workforce Retention

Partnering with local healthcare foundations and education boards to support the area's 120+ healthcare workers and essential service staff.

Infrastructure

Advancing mega-projects like the **Central Peace Regional Water Project** to deliver top-tier, reliable utilities to residents.

By cultivating vibrant communities out of rural hubs, the MD aims to transform the region from a place people simply work, into a place where they choose to stay and raise their children.

Regional Collaboration: The Path Forward

The two-day session closed with a reinforcement of the neighbour-first philosophy. The MD of Spirit River recognizes that it does not operate in a vacuum. Whether it is partnering with the G5 on massive infrastructure pieces like the Central Peace Regional Water pipeline or successfully securing the Alberta Traffic Safety Fund grant through shared municipal backing, strategic partnerships are the mechanism that will bring this 2026 vision to reality. In the fall with a finalized strategic roadmap, the MD of Spirit River enters the second half of the year focused on a clear objective: building an industrial-ready, family-friendly powerhouse in the heart of the Central Peace.



Facilitator Max Fritz, Councillor Evelyn Bzowy, Assistant CAO, Development Officer, & Economic Development Coordinator Monty Bremont, Chief Administrative Officer Shirley Hayden, Director of Corporate Services Elena De Leon, Councillor Bernie Schoorlemmer, Deputy Reeve Dean Wark, Executive Administrative Assistant Rebecca Fitzsimmons, and Reeve Tony van Rootselaar.

Collaboration and Health Care Take Center Stage at July G5 Meeting

Regional collaboration, health care sustainability, and strategic community growth were the core themes of the G5 municipalities' meeting on July 8, 2026. The meeting brought together local leadership alongside guest speakers to address both the immediate challenges facing rural infrastructure and the long-term benefits of unified regional planning.

Health Complex Outlook: The Future of Central Peace Health Care

The first half of the meeting focused heavily on the future of local medical services.

Ryan Squires, Director of the Central Peace Health Complex, provided an extensive update on the facility's operations and the broader outlook for health care delivery in the region.

Squires spoke candidly about the ongoing operational hurdles rural health care facilities face, particularly regarding staffing pressures and resource allocation. However, he emphasized that the strength of the region lies within its collaborative identity, describing the surrounding municipalities not just as separate towns, but collectively as a unified "health care community."

"We are a health care community," Squires noted, highlighting that there are approximately **120 health care workers** operating within the Spirit River area alone.

He stressed that maintaining the long-term viability of the Central Peace Health Complex relies on the community's continued support

to keep these vital workers rooted in the region. Local health care foundations and municipal partnerships remain central to addressing staffing challenges by advocating for rural retention programs and facility upgrades.

Strategic Unity: Western Sky Land Trust on Regional Growth

Shifting the focus to long-term community development, the second half of the meeting featured **Max Fritz, Executive Director of the Western Sky Land Trust**. Fritz shared insights into how municipalities like the G5—a partnership model consisting of Birch Hills County, MDI33 of Spirit River, Saddle Hills County, Town of Spirit River, and Village of Rycroft—can work together strategically to elevate the quality of life for their residents.

Fritz focused on the power of community-minded, collaborative frameworks. Drawing from the ethos of land trusts and strategic regional groups, he explained that when neighbouring municipalities align their environmental, agricultural, and infrastructural goals, they unlock far greater bargaining power and resource efficiency.

Key Takeaways from Fritz's Address:
Shared Vision Over Individual Interests: Rural communities thrive when they stop competing for individual pieces of funding and the duplication of key services for the area and instead present unified, multi-municipal initiatives to provincial bodies.

Preserving Local Heritage: Strategic planning isn't just about development; it's about safeguarding natural landscapes, watersheds, and agricultural assets that define the fabric of rural Alberta life.

Collaborative Quality of Life: Joint initiatives—ranging from shared recreational corridors to regional safety funds—allow smaller municipalities to offer amenities and protections that would be cost-prohibitive to pursue alone.

The meeting concluded with G5 leadership discussing internal updates, including welcoming the new CAO for the Town of Spirit River, Kier Gervais, and community updates solidifying the very spirit of cooperation championed by both speakers throughout the day.



Growing Community Through Generosity

On Saturday, July 25, during the Rycroft Ag Society's Race the 8 event, the **Rycroft Merry Pioneers** served up a delicious Pancake Breakfast for the crowd while also accepting donations in support of the **Central Peace Community Gardens – Rycroft**.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of those who stopped by, the Merry Pioneers raised an impressive **\$1,875** for the Community Gardens!

"We were happy to be able to present the Central Peace Community Gardens with a cheque for \$1,875," said Brenda Day, President of the Rycroft Merry Pioneers. "This money will help the Community Gardens get supplies that are needed for the garden."

A heartfelt thank you to the Merry Pioneers for organizing this wonderful fundraiser, and to everyone who came out, enjoyed breakfast, and helped support such a worthwhile community project. **It's amazing what we can accomplish when our community comes together!**



MOUNTIE MINUTE

Back to school already? Sorry kids, it's that time of year again! I'll again take this opportunity to remind drivers to be extra careful on the roads, as school will soon be back in session. Kids will be running around all over the place, so you need to keep your eyes peeled and pay attention. Put down that cell phone and watch the road!

Pedestrians aren't the only thing to watch out for. School busses will be back on the road too. You should already know the rules regarding stopping for busses. BOTH directions of travel MUST stop and not proceed until the bus is finished dropping off or picking up students, and turns off their flashing lights. But if in doubt, the instructions are written on the front and back of the bus.

Our area is very safe overall, but that doesn't mean that some creep won't try something. Teach your children that if they see something weird to let you or another safe adult know. Whether that might be a suspicious person lurking around the playground, or a vehicle doing the same. If they do see something, the more details the better. Things like colour of clothing or vehicle, and vehicle type (car/suv/truck/minivan/convertible, etc.)

The Spirit River RCMP are reminding residents to take extra precautions to protect their mail and parcels while away from home, particularly during holiday seasons (summer, Christmas, Spring break, etc.).

Extended absences, combined with unattended deliveries, can create opportunities for mail theft, package theft, and mail-related fraud. Criminals often target residential areas during periods when homes may be unoccupied for days or weeks at a time.

The Spirit River RCMP encourages the public to consider the following mail and parcel safety tips:

- Pause your mail delivery through Canada Post if you're going to be away for an extended period or have a trusted neighbour or friend collect it daily.
- Track your parcels and try to schedule deliveries for when you'll be home. Many courier services now offer delivery window estimates and secure pick-up alternatives.
- Consider using a locked mailbox or parcel drop box, especially in rural or high-theft areas.
- Install a doorbell camera or motion-sensor surveillance, which can deter package theft and assist police in identifying suspects if a theft occurs.
- Don't advertise your absence on social media. Wait until you return from vacation to post photos or updates.
- Be cautious of mail-based scams, such as fake "missed delivery" notices, fraudulent sweepstakes letters, or packages that require unexpected payment on delivery.
- Also, be aware of these common mail-related scams:
- Phishing scams posing as delivery notifications from Canada Post, FedEx, or UPS that ask you to click on a link or provide personal information.
- Fake prize or lottery mailings claiming you've won money or goods and must pay a fee to collect them.
- "Brushing scams" where you receive unsolicited goods, potentially indicating your identity or address has been compromised.

If you receive suspicious mail or suspect you've been targeted by a scam, call 911 and report it to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre at www.antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca or by calling 1-888-495-8501.

SEPTEMBER is Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month

Suicide affects all classes and ages of people, but suicide rates are especially high for teens and young adults. Traditionally, the media has been opposed to speaking of suicide, as there were fears that it would encourage others to commit the act. In reality, research has shown that speaking about it actually has the opposite effect, and will encourage others to reconsider ending their own lives and seek professional help instead.

Most times, there are warning signs that may include:

- Mood swings, or a consistent low, depressed mood;
- Being tired and sleeping more than usual;
- No interest in things they used to enjoy such as hobbies, sports, or friend groups;
- Poor performance at work or school;
- Sudden unexpected changes in their behavior;
- Reckless behavior such as excessive speeding, drinking, or using drugs;
- A negative change in personal hygiene;
- Eating problems such as eating significantly more or less than usual;
- Expressions of hopelessness or worthlessness "the world would be better off without me";
- Giving away much of their personal possessions that were special to them.

For friends and family, speaking about it doesn't have to be awkward and uncomfortable. The goal is to make it known that there is support and that there's somebody there when they need it. Obviously, pick an appropriate time and place. It's a private matter and they deserve dignity and privacy.

- Maybe they're hungry? That might sound ridiculous to some, but your brain can't function properly when it's not getting enough nutrients. When they're already upset by something, their brain will have an even harder time processing what's going on in their life if they haven't eaten. This leads to irrational decisions as they can't think clearly. Bring them something healthy and filling, and eat with them, and then talk about what's going on.
- Let them know that if they need to, they can talk to you about their problems. They might tell you to leave them alone, and they don't want to talk about it. Don't be offended, as they may want to talk to someone neutral who doesn't know them personally. Don't pry and pressure them, instead, reassure them that you'll be there if they need help. In that case, you could ask them if there's someone else they might want to talk to, and help them reach out to that person. They might feel embarrassed, and prefer to only talk to a doctor instead.
- You don't have to play psychologist and solve their problems. Be an ear and listen to them. That alone is a huge help. Ask them how you can help them get through this.
- Encourage them that their life is still worth living, and that you truly do care about them.
- Keep that conversation open.
- Don't make empty promises, though. Instead, make yourself available. If you're not up for the task, that's fine too. You can refer them to professionals who will be happy to help.
- They trust you, so don't break that trust. It takes a lot of guts to come and tell someone how they feel. The only person you should be telling about this is a mental health professional such as a counselor or therapist, as they're trained and better equipped to help, or Police, as we can bring the person to the hospital. They may be mad at you in the short term, but you're doing the right thing.
- Sometimes, you can cut to the chase and just ask them in a straightforward way "are you thinking about suicide?" Don't panic if they say yes. Stay with them and keep talking to them about it, then look for help for them.

For those who are considering suicide:

1. Please, reach out to someone. Find someone you feel comfortable with talking to, but if you're really in crisis, reach out to anyone you can.
2. There are resources to help you and get you back on track.
3. It can be difficult to reach out to someone, but you've got the guts and you can do it.
4. You might feel worthless or think the world is a better place without you. None of that is true. Your brain is lying to you.
5. Don't ever feel ashamed to speak about your mental health. Nothing about it should make you feel shameful or embarrassed. You wouldn't feel embarrassed if you went to the doctor because you got a bad flu or broke your arm, so you shouldn't feel embarrassed to go to the doctor about your mental health either.
6. Still not convinced, and want to handle it on your own? While I wouldn't recommend trying to handle it all on your own, here's a few tips:
 - a. Go to bed – try to get some sleep and reconsider in the morning. You'll find that your outlook has probably changed. In the morning, you might feel like you have more strength and are ready to talk to someone.
 - b. Get some exercise – your body releases endorphins that will make you feel better. You don't need to run a marathon. A quick walk around the block will help get some fresh air and your blood flowing.
 - c. Have you eaten yet today? Go find something to eat. Don't worry about that diet or calories or any other nonsense. Find something that you like and start eating, but not to excess. Even better if you can find someone to eat with.

The other issue that is common these days is people saying nasty things such as "go kill yourself". Such a trashy unoriginal insult to say to someone. It's sometimes said in a joking manner, but often, it's said to intentionally hurt someone. Stop it. The person on the receiving end might be quietly struggling with thoughts of suicide, and your disgusting comment could send them over the edge. There is no need to say such things, and you only make yourself sound like an idiot. Many people suffering mental health problems show no outward signs that they're in crisis. The way to help these people is kindness. Start being polite to strangers. It costs nothing to make conversation with the cashier at the store, say thank you and speak respectfully to the person taking your order at the drive-thru or restaurant, or pause for a few extra seconds to hold the door for someone.

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis or want to talk to someone, you can reach out to any of the following:

- Suicide Crisis Helpline: Call or text 988
- Alberta Health Services:
 - Mental Health Helpline: 1-866-332-2322
 - Addiction Helpline: 1-877-303-2642
- Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 or text "CONNECT" to 686868
- Talk Suicide Canada: 1-833-456-4566 or text 45645
- Crisis Text Line: Text "CONNECT" to 741741
- Text4Hope: Text "HOPEAB" to 393939
- Open2Change: Text "Open2Change" to 3939393 for addictions help
- CancerCare: Text "CancerCare" to 393939 for help with cancer diagnosis
- Hope for Wellness Helpline: 1-855-242-3310 or Text "WELLNESS" to 741741

As always, if you are in urgent need of help, or concerned about another person, call 911.

Stay Safe,
Corporal Don McCullough
RCMP Spirit River Detachment

A Community Worth Celebrating

Communities are built one relationship at a time. While roads, bridges, and public services form the foundation of a municipality, it is the people who truly make it a place to call home. Neighbours who lend a helping hand, volunteers who give their time, local businesses that support community initiatives, and residents who take pride in where they live all contribute to making the MD of Spirit River a vibrant and welcoming place.



That is why each year, Council and Staff look forward to hosting the Annual Residents' Appreciation BBQ. It's an opportunity to step away from the day-to-day work of local government and simply spend time with the people we are privileged to serve. More than a meal, the event is our way of saying thank you—for your support, your involvement, and for helping make our communities such wonderful places to live, work, and raise a family.



This year's Seniors Event & Annual Residents' Appreciation BBQ, held on Thursday, July 23 at Nardam Campground, brought together residents from across the municipality for an afternoon of great food, friendly conversation, and meaningful connections. It was wonderful to see neighbours catching up, new friendships being made, and community organizations sharing information about the valuable programs and services they offer.



A very special thank you goes out to Mitch Cedar for entertaining the crowd with his amazing musical talent, and a heartfelt thank you to the many organizations that participated and helped make the day both enjoyable and informative:

- Central Peace Family & Community Support Services (FCSS)
- Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance
- Spirit River Municipal Library
- Happy Hour Club
- South Peace Regional Archives
- Spirit River & District Museum & Historical Society
- Spirit River Regional Day Care Society (SRRDS)
- Agricultural Service Board (ASB)
- Grande Spirit Foundation
- Kimberly Talmey Counselling Inc.
- Alberta Forestry and Parks.



We would also like to congratulate all of our door prize winners and extend our sincere appreciation to our generous door prize sponsors—Finning Cat and Flaman Trailers—for donating the prizes that added an extra touch of excitement to the day.

Events like this serve as an important reminder that local government is about more than providing services—it is about building relationships and fostering a sense of belonging. When residents have opportunities to gather, connect, and celebrate together, our communities become stronger, more resilient, and more welcoming for everyone.

To everyone who attended, volunteered, donated, or helped organize this year's event, thank you for making it another memorable success. We look forward to continuing this tradition of celebrating the people who make the MD of Spirit River such a special place to call home.



Council Hits the Road: MD of Spirit River's Annual Tour Uncovers Safety, Erosion & Access Concerns

Resident feedback guides inspections as Council prioritizes railway access, intersection safety, and major washout repairs.

On July 20th, the Municipal District of Spirit River No. 133 Council conducted its annual road tour, giving members the opportunity to evaluate key infrastructure challenges across the municipality first-hand. Direct feedback and inquiries from residents played a central role in shaping this year's itinerary.

During the tour, Council observed several priority issues:

- **Railway Crossing Access:** Members reviewed access concerns at a residential property where a single rail crossing approach is frequently blocked by stationary train cars, creating ongoing challenges for service delivery and emergency response.
- **Intersection Safety:** Inspections focused on approaches where winter driving conditions and icing present critical safety risks, particularly for school bus routes and local traffic.

- **Approach Crossings:** Following resident inquiries, several approach locations were identified and added to the list for structural review or routine maintenance.
- **Erosion and Severe Washouts:** Council assessed significant road erosion in two areas where adjacent steep riverbanks threaten long-term roadway stability and will require substantial remediation.
- **Drainage and Roadway Stability:** Soft spots throughout the local road network were examined alongside several culverts to ensure effective water management and structural integrity.



Councillor Evelyn Bzowy, Councillor Bernie Schoorlemmer, Deputy Reeve Dean Wark, Reeve Tony van Rootselaar, and Councillor Shelley Rozecki

Remediating major erosion and structural washouts—most notably at the Rawleck Slide—remains a top priority for the Municipal District. Funding these large-scale stabilization projects continues to present significant financial challenges. In previous years, the MD has submitted multiple applications for provincial support through the Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program (STIP). Despite the critical impact of the Rawleck Slide washout on local roadway stability, these applications have been unsuccessful due to the highly competitive nature and stringent requirements of the program. Council and administration remain committed to refining future grant applications and advocating for provincial funding to address these costly repairs.

Looking ahead, the Deputy Reeve outlined plans to strengthen resident involvement in future infrastructure reviews. Beginning in 2027, an official notice will be published in the MD newsletter advising residents how and when they can submit specific road concerns directly to the Public Works Supervisor. Submitted items will be compiled and added to the official list of inspection sites for Council's spring road tour.

Council thanks residents for the valuable input provided this season. Community feedback remains essential in guiding Public Works priorities and maintaining a safe and reliable municipal road network.

CHIEF'S BRIEFS



Wow, August 12th already. Where did the summer go?

Since my last briefing to you we have had 5 Medical First Responder calls, 1 Motor Vehicle Collision, 1 Fire, and 3 alarm calls. This brings our total emergency calls this year to 116 at the time this was written. As of this date we have 2 more incidents on the books than we did this time last year. If this trend continues, we will surpass our highest call volume in the 10 years that the CPFR has been a department.

Our team is growing once again bringing our member numbers to 28, serving and giving back to the community.

Training is going well; we put on a regional training course for Electric Vehicle fire management and extrication. It was very well received, with 30 firefighters from across the Northwest taking part. Our members also took part in a heavy auto extrication course in Fairview. The course used vehicles like a cement truck, school bus, small cars, and semis; lots of good information and techniques to better our members in serving the community. You may have noticed a helicopter flying around Spirit River on our last training night. We were very fortunate to take part in some helicopter operations that replicated attending a medical event in very hard-to-reach areas, as well as maneuvering in and out of the air vessel. Of course, for added excitement, the pilot took the doors off the helicopter for us to experience what it will be like loading patients and/or equipment. It was a great learning experience, and we appreciate our neighbours putting on this training. Everyone can't wait until we do it again next year.

With all the rain the area has received, wildfire in our area is still a risk, but not like it has been in recent years. But saying that, water levels have risen, so we advise caution when around waterways, and to take that extra step in preparing yourselves out on the water.

Next month I hope to have more news in the briefing on the new fire hall project. Things are moving ahead but slowly. Thank you for your patience on this project. We're very excited to see it transpire.

Please be careful out there, and thank you for your continued support,

Brian Kroes
Fire Chief, CPFR

COUNCIL MOTIONS MDSR No. 133 Council on July 8th 2026



The next Council meetings will be held on **September 9th & 23rd at 9:00am**, in Council Chambers located in the MD Office in Spirit River. Council meetings are open to the public and streamed live.

The following motions were made at our Council Meeting on July 8, 2026.

Wild Boar Extermination

Moved by Councillor Schoorlemmer that Council direct the Agricultural Fieldman to look into rationale for exception to wild boar extermination, and further to bring the discovery back to a future Council meeting.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Public Auction Date

Moved by Reeve van Rootselaar that Council establish the date for the 2026 Public Auction for roll number 136200 to be held on November 9th, 2026 at 2 pm.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Pregnancy & Infant Loss Awareness Proclamation

Moved by Councillor Bzowy that Council of the Municipal District of Spirit River No. 133 hereby proclaims October 15th, 2026 as Pregnancy & Infant Loss Awareness Day, and October 2026 as Pregnancy and Loss Awareness Month, within the Municipal District, and further that Council directs Administration to promote the proclamation as presented, in the MD Newsletter and on MD social media sites.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Anyone wishing to review more of our Council Meeting minutes can visit the MD of Spirit River No. 133 website under **Council and Council Meeting Minutes**.



Central Peace Family and Community Support Services
Shelley Loroff, FCSS Coordinator
Office: (587) 771-3567 or Mobile: (780) 864-5698
4202 50th Street, Spirit River

SERVING THE MD #133, SPIRIT RIVER, RYCROFT, & WESTERN BIRCH HILLS COUNTY

On occasion, FCSS staff may be out of the office. If you require in-person assistance, please **CALL AHEAD (587-771-3567)** to ensure that someone will be available to help!

Service Canada Assistance

Representatives from Service Canada will be at the Central Peace Medical Clinic, in Spirit River, on September 9th from 10:00am to 3:00pm to assist with applying for a social security number (bring your birth certificate, certificate of Indian Status, and any other forms of federal or provincial identification you may have); a PAC access code to sign up for My Service Canada; the Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP); Employment Insurance (EI); the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Old Age Security (OAS); the Canada Disability Benefit (CDB).

If you are unable to meet with Service Canada during this visit, you can request information and assistance through the Outreach Support Centre from 8:30-4:00, Mon-Fri: 1-877-631-2657.

Pen Pals

Would you like to receive a letter or picture? Do you like to write letters? Call our office to sign up for the Pen Pal program.

Home Alone Course

How to know when you are ready to be home alone for short periods of time. This course teaches Stranger Safety, Basic First Aid Safety, having a Phone/Contact List, following house rules, Fire Safety, Internet Safety, Key responsibilities, and Emergency Planning. Training will be held at the Rycroft Community Hall at 5408 47th Avenue, on Saturday, September 19th, from 10:00am to 3:00pm. For ages 9-12, \$20 registration fee. Registrations can be picked up and dropped off at the FCSS office or give us a call.

Community Information Night

We are looking to restart a Community Information Night for our community. We're inviting all the clubs, organizations, and community services to come join us for an informal round table discussion on what you can offer to our community. Happening on Thursday, September 17th, starting at 7:00pm in the Ross Room at 4502 50th Street, Spirit River.

We respectfully acknowledge that we are located on Treaty 8 land, the traditional home of many First Nations and Métis.

Rycroft Rage Capture Third Straight Wheatbelt Championship

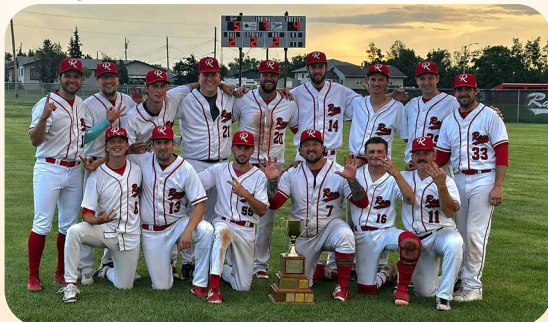
The Rycroft Rage are Wheatbelt Baseball League champions once again—and they did it in dramatic fashion!

The Rage captured their **third consecutive Wheatbelt Baseball League Championship and their 10th overall**, defeating the Peace River Stampeders in three straight games in the final.

The championship-clinching game came down to a thrilling 5-4 victory for the Rage. Trailing 4-2, Rycroft needed a spark—and Aaron Charchuk delivered in a big way.

In the fourth inning, Charchuk launched a **three-run home run**, putting the Rage ahead 5-4. From there, the Rage held onto their lead and never looked back, securing the win and another Wheatbelt championship title.

Congratulations to the **Rycroft Rage** on an incredible championship run and a remarkable 10th Wheatbelt Baseball League title!



Back row from left: Alex Martin, Darnell Turner, Aaron Charchuk, Eric Turner, Kale Helgesen, Dayne Walder, Billy Barbarich, Dylan Borman and Kenton White.

Bottom row from left: Noah Zenkewich, Morgan Zahara, Simon Hamilton, Kurt Konopelka, Cooper Lefley and Josh Kinnee.

Race the 8 Delivers Another Unforgettable Weekend of Action and Community

For more than two decades, **Solution Services Race the 8** has been bringing people together to celebrate the excitement of western heritage, friendly competition, and community spirit. Now in its 21st year, the event once again proved why it has become one of the Central Peace's most anticipated summer traditions.

What began as a chuckwagon racing event has grown into an action-packed, three-day festival offering something for every member of the family. From the roar of the wagons to the cheers from the grandstands, Race the 8 delivered nonstop entertainment from start to finish.

This year's lineup featured thrilling chuckwagon races, bull riding, wild pony races, mutton bustin', calf scrambles, the ever-popular Mexican Poker, and the Big Baller competition. Younger visitors had plenty to enjoy as well, spending time in the Kid's Corral and bouncing the day away in the inflatable play area.



Saturday evening kept the energy going as award-winning country artist **Quinton Blair** took to the stage, giving spectators another reason to celebrate after a full day of excitement.

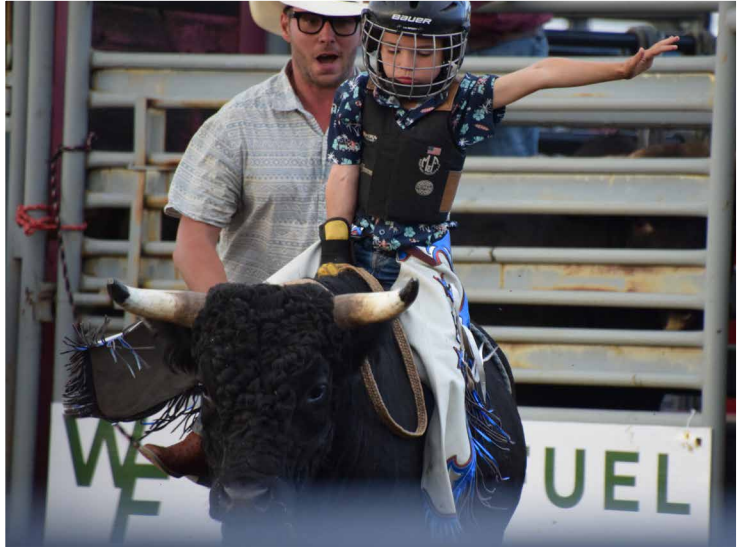
Among the weekend's biggest crowd favourites were the unique spectator events that have become synonymous with Race the 8.

Mexican Poker is not your average card game. Four brave contestants gather around a poker table, but once the cards are dealt, a bull is released into the arena. The objective? Stay seated longer than everyone else. It's equal parts courage, strategy, and pure entertainment, keeping spectators laughing and cheering every year.

Then there's the **Big Baller**—an event that raises the stakes even higher. Participants climb inside oversized inflatable balls and attempt to avoid an energetic bull determined to knock them off their feet. The last contestant standing earns the bragging rights, although everyone walks away with a memorable story to tell.

While the action in the arena draws the crowds, the success of Race the 8 extends far beyond the competitions themselves. Events of this scale are only possible because of the incredible support of volunteers, sponsors, local businesses, organizations, and community members who generously give their time, resources, and encouragement. Whether you volunteered, sponsored the event, competed, or simply came out to enjoy the festivities, your support continues to make Race the 8 one of the region's signature summer events and a tradition that the community looks forward to year after year.





Race the 8

SPONSORS

TITLE SPONSOR



Some partnerships are measured in dollars. Others are measured in time, hard work, and people who simply show up whenever they're needed. To our Title Sponsor, **Solution Services**, thank you.

Your support of Race the 8 extends far beyond your sponsorship. Year after year, your crews are there helping us build this event from the ground up, and when the dust settles, you're still there helping us pack it all away. Throughout the weekend, your team is always ready to step in, lend a hand, solve a problem, or help wherever it's needed — often before anyone even has to ask.

That kind of partnership can't be purchased. It's built on community, generosity, and a genuine desire to see local events succeed.

Every sponsor who supports Race the 8 plays an important role in making this weekend possible, and we are grateful for each and every one of them. Today, we want to recognize Solution Services for the unique way they continue to invest not only in this event, but in the people behind it.

On behalf of the Rycroft Agricultural Society, our volunteers, competitors, and everyone who joined us this weekend—thank you for believing in what we're building together. We couldn't do it without you, and we're incredibly proud to have Solution Services as part of the Race the 8 family.

Thank you for standing beside us, every step of the way.

EVENT SPONSORS

Whether you sponsored an event, donated services, provided equipment, or invested in our vision, your support helped make Race the 8 possible. Every contribution—big or small—played a part in creating an unforgettable weekend for our competitors, volunteers, and spectators. It takes a community to build an event like Race the 8.

As we reflect on another incredible weekend, we want to extend our heartfelt thanks to every business, organization, and individual who chose to support us this year. Thank you for believing in Race the 8 and in the Rycroft Agricultural Society. We are incredibly grateful for each and every one of you.

Please join us in recognizing our amazing 2026 sponsors.

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And last, but not least...

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Carly Boyd Photography
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THANK YOU!

WHAT AN INCREDIBLE WEEKEND!

TO OUR SPONSORS, contestants, vendors, entertainers, and community partners—thank you for your support.

TO OUR VOLUNTEERS, you are the heart of this event. Your time, energy and dedication make it all possible.

TO OUR ATTENDEES, thank you for showing up, cheering loud and making memories with us.

TO EVERYONE who played a part, big or small—

thank you! ♥

Because of you, Race the 8 is more than an event—
IT'S OUR COMMUNITY.

SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!
JULY 23, 24, 25, 2027



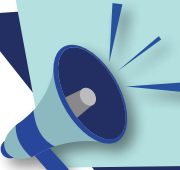



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Brian Perillat
Keynote Speaker

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Market Insights | Producer Panel
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Central Peace Regional Water Supply Project Overview and July 2026 Update

On July 8, 2026, Saddle Hills County organized a tour of the Central Peace Water project for the G5 Councils where they were provided with a progress update.

To recap, the Central Peace Regional Water Supply System is a major infrastructure initiative in Northern Alberta, led by Saddle Hills County in partnership with Birch Hills County, MD#133 of Spirit River, Town of Spirit River, and the Village of Rycroft. The system is designed to provide a reliable, high-quality regional water supply. It draws raw water from the Peace River near Dunvegan, treats it at a new Central Peace Regional Water Treatment Plant, and distributes it to communities in the area. The project addresses long-term water needs in the region, supported significantly by Alberta's Water for Life grant funding (with 90% provincial support for key elements like the treatment plant design).

Project Components and Phases

The project is divided into phases with multiple contracts:

- **Phase 1 & 2:** Focus on the river intake, raw water transfer station, and initial piping (including challenging crossings of the Peace River Valley).
- **Phase 3:** Includes raw water reservoirs at the treatment plant site and further distribution elements.

Key elements include:

- A new river intake structure on the Peace River.
- Raw water transfer piping [steel and high-density polyethylene (HDPE)].
- Pumping station/wet well.
- Raw water reservoirs.
- Associated infrastructure like power supply, access roads, and site restoration.

MPE Engineering Ltd. (a division of Englobe) serves as the consulting engineer, handling design, oversight, and project management.

Current Status (as of July 2026, per the July 2, 2026 Project Overview Report)

Construction is actively underway on several fronts, with notable progress in 2025–2026 despite seasonal challenges (winter shutdowns, river levels, and weather).

1. Steel Pipe Contract for Peace River Valley Hill (Phase 1 & 2, Contract 2 – Option Excavating Inc.)

- Horizontal directional drilling (HDD) of the ~1,770 m steel pipe section completed in early 2025 (drilling Feb 2025, reaming, and pullback by March 4, 2025).
- Transition to HDPE piping (~900 m) installed by open-cut trenching in April–May 2025.
- Valve and temporary pig launch riser installed in June 2025.



- Concrete valve chamber vaults: Top-of-hill vault installed April 2026; bottom-of-hill vault delayed due to sizing issues for higher-pressure valves (larger vault ordered for summer 2026 delivery).
- Coordination ongoing with Greenfield Construction (Contract 1) at the Dunvegan site. Option Excavating returned in June 2026 for site prep and is expected to complete the bottom vault, final steel piping, flushing, and testing in August–September 2026 (post-harvest). Final restoration to follow.
- Wet well base slab concrete pour completed June 19, 2026, with wet curing. Walls to follow.
- Work paused temporarily in early July 2026 due to high river levels; resuming as levels recede.
- Overall completion targeted for autumn 2027.

2. River Intake and Raw Water Transfer Station (Phase 1 & 2, Contract 1 – Greenfield Construction)

- Mobilized July 2025 after contract award in late May 2025.
- Access roads, bulk excavation, and temporary trestle bridge (using 275-ton cranes) constructed in 2025. Bridge disassembled for winter and reassembled in 2026.
- Secant pile wall and 28 m deep wet well excavation completed in 2025.
- River intake piping (three pipes in 42" casing) installed and grouted in early 2026.

3. HDPE Raw Water Transfer Piping (Phase 1 & 2, Contracts 3+)

- Contracts not yet tendered. Alignment finalized; design restarted in April 2026. Awaiting provincial grant funding confirmation for tendering later in 2026.

4. Electrical Service to Pumping Station

- Route from Village of Rycroft. ATCO proposals refined over years; servicing agreement executed in 2025.
- Regulatory approvals, easements, and coordination ongoing (meetings in 2025–2026). Tentative power service in late autumn 2026.





5. Water Treatment Plant Site Raw Water Reservoirs (Phase 3, Contract 1A – Northern Road Builders)

- Tender closed March 2026; awarded early March 2026.
- Mobilized late March 2026 for temporary dugout (water source for construction), then main work from mid-May.
- Topsoil stripping, reservoir cell excavation, berm embankments, and underground piping advanced by June–July 2026.
- Progress: ~80% of subcut complete for reservoirs; laydown area relocated; water source secured.
- Minor disruptions from heavy rains in late June/early July. Completion scheduled for September 2026. Aerial photos (May–July 2026) show significant earthworks progress on the reservoir site.

Project Budget and Funding Costs have risen since the 2018 Pre-Design Report. Saddle Hills County secured additional provincial grants (e.g., confirmed for 2025) and continues pursuing further support. An updated preliminary opinion of probable costs was provided; overall project estimates in the range of ~\$100M+ (various reports cite figures around \$103M–\$105.9M).

Next Steps (per July 2026 report)

- Advance ongoing construction contracts.
- Finalize pipeline design and tender remaining sections.
- Secure remaining grant funding.
- Complete regulatory approvals and ATCO power coordination.
- Site restoration and testing.

Broader Context

The project is in the “Under Construction” stage with a 2025+ timeline. It represents a significant investment in regional water security for the Central Peace, involving complex river works, HDD crossings, and large-scale earthworks. Progress has been methodical, with winter considerations and environmental factors (e.g., river ice, wildlife zones, farmland) managed carefully.

For the most up-to-date official details, refer to Saddle Hills County resources. Scan the QR Code to view the MPE Engineering July 2026 Report. Construction photos in the July 2026 overview highlight active sites at the wet well, trestle bridge, and reservoirs.



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Friendly Reminder

The deadline for **Spirit of the Peace** newsletter submissions, paid or non-profit, is due by the **12th** of each month.



Thank you for helping us keep the newsletter organized and running smoothly!

Field Feed: Your AG Report

Salt Injuries on Trees: Effects, Prevention, and Management

The widespread use of salt for road de-icing and dust control in northern Alberta takes a measurable toll on nearby water and vegetation. Public safety remains the top priority on northern Alberta roads, and salt-based products help keep winter driving conditions safer. According to Environment Canada, more than five million tonnes of salt are applied annually on Canadian highways.

Sodium chloride (NaCl) is the most common de-icing salt, followed by calcium, magnesium, and potassium chlorides. These products differ in melting temperatures, cost, and impact on trees and other plants. Research indicates that sodium chloride is among the most damaging to vegetation.

How Salt Reaches Trees

Plants take up salt in two primary ways during the growing season. First, moving vehicles and air currents create drifts of salt particles that spray, splash, or dust onto trees. Damage often appears quickly and is limited to the side of the tree facing the road; sheltered portions remain green. Second, roots absorb dissolved salt from the soil. Soils may be naturally saline or have elevated levels from repeated applications. In these cases, salt builds up more gradually, causing entire trees to decline and eventually die.

Salt can affect trees and vegetation up to 200 metres from divided highways or about 35 metres from single-lane highways and secondary roads. Damage is typically more severe on the side closest to the road and on branches above snow level. Higher traffic volumes intensify the problem.

Recognizing the Symptoms

Symptoms of salt toxicity include leaf burn, yellowing of needle tips that later turn reddish-brown or reddish-purple, wilting even when soil moisture is adequate, lack of flowering, and early fall defoliation. In evergreens, browning often becomes noticeable in late winter and worsens over time. Hardwood species usually show burning early in spring.

Salt-water spray causes needles to brown from the tips inward. Affected needles eventually shed, leaving branches barren and dead. When soil salt levels are uniform, the entire tree suffers, whether it is young or well established. Evergreens and shrubs along sidewalks where salt is used to melt snow frequently display this browning. Over-application of fertilizer can produce similar salt damage, and salt injury can leave trees more vulnerable to drought or cold-temperature stress.

Hardwoods Versus Conifers

Salt affects the two groups differently. Coniferous trees retain their needles year-round, so salt particles remain on spruce, pine, and other evergreens for longer periods. Hardwoods shed their leaves in winter, so salt mainly contacts buds, twigs, and trunks during the de-icing season. In summer, when salt is applied for dust control, hardwoods may suffer more because of their larger leaf surfaces. In both cases, any salt that does not land directly on the foliage ends up in the soil and is taken up through the roots.

Measuring and Understanding Risk

Soil-testing laboratories measure salinity as the electrical conductivity of an extract (ECe) in deciSiemens per metre (dS/m). Most trees grow reasonably well in soils with an ECe up to 4. Beyond that level growth is restricted. Only salt-tolerant species perform satisfactorily in soils ranging from 8 to 16 dS/m. For comparison, the chloride concentration limit for drinking water is less than 250 mg/L.

Several environmental factors influence the severity of injury: higher temperatures and stronger sunlight increase water loss and salt uptake; wind both dehydrates foliage and deposits more airborne salt; humidity and precipitation reduce dehydration and wash salt from leaves; sandy soils allow greater movement of salty water, while clay holds it nearer the surface; and low-lying or downslope areas accumulate more salt-laden runoff. Injuries are most common on the road-facing and down-wind sides of trees. Snow cover can protect branches, reducing visible damage.

Salt-Tolerant Species and Management Strategies

No plant is completely immune, but tolerance varies widely. Species with high salt tolerance include sea buckthorn, silver buffaloberry, Austrian pine, Russian olive, and Rocky Mountain juniper. Medium-tolerance options include caragana, Villosa lilac, snowberry, spreading juniper, green ash, Manitoba maple, ponderosa pine, hawthorn, chokecherry, American and Siberian elms, laurel leaf willow, some apples, and mountain ash. Low-tolerance species—Colorado blue spruce, rose, Douglas fir, balsam fir, cottonwood, aspen, birch, raspberry, dogwood, little-leaved linden, winged euonymus, spirea, and larch—should be avoided in high-exposure sites. Practical management steps can significantly reduce injury. Plant salt-tolerant and winter-hardy species farther from roads. Learn each species' biology and habitat requirements before planting, watching especially for invasive tendencies. Wash salt residue from trees in early spring. Install snow fences to keep drifts away from plantings. Inform local authorities if dust-control spraying is unnecessary near valued trees. Prune and water plants showing dieback, but first test the water for sodium. Weaker trees attract more insects and diseases, so maintaining overall health is essential. By choosing appropriate species, placing them thoughtfully, and applying simple cultural practices, residents can keep roads safe while protecting the trees that enhance northern Alberta's landscapes.

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The MD is accepting advertising and will consider discounts for frequent or repeat advertisers. *The MD reserves the right to refuse advertising.*

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