

Chronology - Foothills County Lower Highwood Mitigation Program

(Current to March, 2021)

2010-2013: Partnered with the Town of High River and WorleyParsons towards the development of a comprehensive Flood Management Master Plan (FMMP) for the Town of high River and adjacent areas of Foothills County. This work was nearing completion when the June 2013 event occurred.

June 20, 2013: The Highwood River experienced an extreme flooding event.

2013-2014: The Government of Alberta purchased 24 properties deemed located in the Floodway on the Highwood River upstream from the Town of High River under the FDRP (Flood Damage Reduction Program). The property owners were paid assessed value for the properties.

December, 2014: Foothills County retained Worley Parsons Group to undertake modelling of the Highwood River. Worley was chosen because they had recently completed the *Highwood River Flood Management Master Plan (2010-2013)* for the Highwood River Advisory Committee. This plan had included developing a flood model for the portion of the Highwood in proximity to the Town of High River.

Spring 2015: Foothills, with the support of the Province, retained Advisian Worley Parsons Group and Amec Foster Wheeler to undertake the *Scoping Study of Flood Related Areas of Concern On the Highwood River and Little Bow River Within the Municipal District of Foothills (The Scoping Study)*. This work involved 2-D modelling and analysis in the Highwood River watershed. The objectives of this work were to:

- identify and describe flood related risks to M.D. residents and infrastructure;
- undertake a high level flood risk evaluation of the impacts of existing and proposed mitigation measures as well as natural flooding/erosion mechanisms;
- perform high level cost/benefit analysis on individual properties at risk; and
- propose mitigation options to address identified risks and protect M.D. of Foothills residents.

March 2015: The Government of Alberta released the Deltares report. This report was produced by a company from the Netherlands (Deltares) at the direction of the Province. In the report, Deltares recommended against any rebalancing of the flows between the Highwood and Little Bow River. The flow split between these rivers had been altered as a result of the mitigation constructed to protect the Town right after the flood. Subsequent to the construction of the mitigation, the Town of High River and Advisian Worley Parsons Group, had submitted a proposal to rebalance the flows to their previous condition, a proposal that had also been supported by Foothills County. The Government of Alberta officially accepted the results of the Deltares report and confirmed that flows in the Highwood would not be rebalanced, so the landowners downstream on the Highwood would see increased flows due to the mitigation constructed to protect the Town.

March 2016: Advisian and Amec Foster Wheeler submitted the completed Scoping Study to Foothills County.

May 2016: Foothills held two public open houses to inform landowners about the results of the *Scoping Study*. Approximately 120 landowners attended.

June, July, and September 2016: Foothills staff and members of Council held 53 individual meetings with impacted landowners in the Highwood River Watershed to discuss the results of the Scoping Study as they pertained to each of their specific properties.

October 2016: IBI Group was retained by the County with funding from the Province to undertake a *Benefit Cost Analysis of Flood Damage Reduction Alternatives / Landowner Damage Compensation Proposal*. This study was to focus on all properties along the Highwood River downstream from the Town that were predicted to be impacted by the mitigation constructed to protect the Town of High River and recommend a fair method of determining compensation for the increased flood risk they would face.

Nov 1, 2016: Foothills submitted a proposal to the Government of Alberta for *Highwood / Little Bow Flood Risk Mitigation Program*. This proposal included lands upstream from High River on the Highwood and downstream on the Highwood and Little Bow Rivers.

December 1, 2016: Foothills gave a presentation on the proposal for the *Highwood / Little Bow Flood Risk Mitigation Program* to representatives from Alberta Environment.

December 30, 2016: Foothills submitted supplemental information that had been requested by Alberta Environment with respect to the November 1, 2016 proposal to Alberta Environment.

January 25, 2017: Foothills sent a letter to landowners on the Highwood and Little Bow updating them on work that had been undertaken since the May 2016 public engagement event.

February 9, 2017: The Town of High River sent out a letter to County landowners in the area directly south of the Town likely to be impacted by the proposed Southwest Dike, to provide an update on Southwest Dike project.

June 7, 2017: Foothills submitted letter to Andre Corbould, Deputy Minister, Environment and Parks to provide information on the November 2016 proposal for the Highwood/Little Bow program and ask for assistance moving it forward.

June 13, 2017: Foothills sent a letter to Mark Comerford, of the Watershed Adaptation and Resilience Branch of Alberta Environment indicating it had been over six months since we submitted a proposal and we had not yet received a written response or rebuttal to our proposal.

June 27, 2017: Foothills met with representatives from Watershed Adaptation and Resilience Branch of Alberta Environment. Once again, staff from Foothills provided a summary of November 2016 proposal and received direction for revisions. Foothills was told that at that time, the Province was only prepared to support a program for residents downstream of High River with residences that were predicted to be negatively impacted by the mitigation constructed to protect the Town. Provincial staff directed the County to put together a proposal based on this.

July 4, 2017: A letter was sent to Foothills County from Mark Comerford as follow up to the June 27 meeting. The letter outlines that the GoA is unable to support the proposal in its entirety but that they are supportive of the creation of a stand-alone funding proposal to facilitate mitigating or purchasing properties (whichever is the lower cost) with residences at high risk of flooding on the Highwood, downstream from the Town of High River. Mark also indicated that there was a potential under the FREC (Flood Recovery Erosion Control) program for mitigation for the highest priority properties on the

Little Bow because Provincial flood hazard mapping had not been undertaken in that area, resulting in them not being eligible for buyouts under the FDRP program in 2013.

July 10, 2017: Foothills sent a letter to landowners on the Highwood / Little Bow providing July 4, 2017 letter from Mark Comerford for their information.

August, 2017: Foothills received final *Mitigation and Compensation Study* from IBI Group.

September, 2017: Foothills Submitted the initial proposal for *the Lower Highwood Flood Risk Mitigation Program* to the Resilience and Mitigation Branch of Alberta Environment.

October 2, 2017: Foothills met with representatives from the Resilience and Mitigation Branch regarding the proposal submitted in September. Provincial representatives gave direction for revisions that they wanted to see made to the proposal. One of these was a change to the prioritization of properties. The prioritized list was to be based on the amount of additional water that was predicted to be seen at the residence due to the mitigation constructed to protect the Town. Previously, the prioritization was based on the total predicted depth of water at the residence in a 2013 equivalent event.

January, 2018: Foothills Submitted a revised proposal for the *Lower Highwood Flood Risk Mitigation Program* to the Resilience and Mitigation Branch of Alberta Environment.

March 5, 2018: Foothills sent a letter to eligible landowners on the Little Bow River informing them that the Province had allowed the County to redirect unused money that had been allotted for flood recovery in the County to facilitate buy-outs of the properties most at risk on the Little Bow River. As funding was limited, the County would only be able to make offers to the developed properties that were predicted to see the highest level of flood waters. Two properties were subsequently purchased by the County in the fall of 2018.

June 8, 2018: Foothills sent a letter to Eric Denhoff, Deputy Minister, Environment and Parks, providing background on the proposals previously submitted to the Province and asking for assistance to move things forward.

Summer 2018: At Foothills County's request, the Town of High River agreed to send a letter to Eric Denhoff indicating support for the proposed *Lower Highwood Flood Risk Mitigation Program*, to address impacts of the work that had been done to protect the Town.

September 19, 2018: Foothills sent a letter to Minister Shannon Phillips, Minister of Environment and Parks, providing background on the situation on the Lower Highwood and asking for support for the January 2018 proposal for the *Lower Highwood Flood Risk Mitigation Program*.

December 3, 2018: Foothills sent a letter to Rick Blackwood, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategy Division, Environment and Parks, indicating that we feel it is time to revisit the progress that has been made on the proposed Lower Highwood program and requesting a meeting as soon as possible.

Throughout 2018: The Town of High River purchased 3 properties in Foothills County on the south side of High River as part of their South West Dike project. Paid a market appraisal amount.

Q1 and Q2, 2019: The Town of High River has made offers to 6 property owners to purchase easements across their lands which would allow the lands to be flooded in extreme flood events.

February 20, 2019: Foothills County received a letter from Minister Shannon Phillips indicating that the County's application for the Lower Highwood Flood Risk Mitigation program had been approved in the sum of \$2,000,000 for the 2018-2019 Fiscal Year.

March 20, 2019: Foothills County received an executed grant agreement from the Government of Alberta for \$2,000,000 to initiate implementation of Phase 1 of the *Lower Highwood Flood Risk Mitigation Program*.

May-Oct, 2019: Foothills County purchased properties #1 and #2 from the prioritized list of properties on the Lower Highwood negatively impacted by the mitigation constructed to protect the Town of High River.

July 3, 2019: Foothills County's Reeve sent a letter to Minister Jason Nixon, Minister of Environment and Parks, thanking the Government of Alberta for their generous support and approval of year 1 of Phase 1 of the Lower Highwood Flood Mitigation Program. Foothills included a request and application for a \$2 million installment for the 2019/2020 fiscal year in keeping with Foothills County's understanding of the previous year's approval for funding.

November, 2019: Foothills sent a letter sent to Minister Jason Nixon, Minister of Environment and Parks, following up on the June 2019 funding application for an installment of \$2 million for the 2019/2020 fiscal year. Foothills urged the Minister to consider making a commitment to fully funding the Lower Highwood Flood Mitigation Program and requested a response from the government.

March 16, 2020: A response was received from Minister Jason Nixon, Minister of Environment and Parks, indicating that the Government is in a period of financial restraint and there is no available funding for Foothills County's request at this time. Foothills was urged to continue working with Mark Comerford, Director of Resilience Projects.

March 25, 2020: Foothills County approved a motion to acknowledge the letter from Minister Jason Nixon and direct administration to prepare a letter to be sent to the Premier, Jason Nixon, Minister of Environment and Parks, Roger Reid, MLA Livingstone-Macleod, R.J. Sigurdson, MLA Highwood, and Miranda Rosin, MLA Banff-Kananaskis.

June 18, 2020: Foothills County Reeve sent a letter to Premier Jason Kenney providing background on the Lower Highwood mitigation program and urging the Premeir to reconsider making a commitment to fully fund the program in keeping with the governments commitment to *"improve flood resilience by investing in community-level projects, upstream storage, healthy watersheds, flood mapping, river forecasting and emergency response and preparedness"* as stated in the ministry highlights on Budget 2019.

July 23, 2020: Foothills County received a response to the June 18, 2020 letter to the Premier from Minister Jason Nixon thanking the Reeve for the update provided and urging the County to continue working with the Director of Resilience Grant Programs to explore opportunities to leverage the County's existing grant funding to ensure its most effective use.

October 29, 2020: Foothills County sent an update letter to landowners identified in Phase 1 of the Lower Highwood indicating that the County had used the grant received in the spring of 2019 to purchase the two properties ranked highest on the list of affected properties and that remediation was

planned for Spring of 2021. It also indicated that the County had applied for the 2019-2020 fiscal year instalment of the grant funding and the request was denied due to provincial budget constraints. It went on to describe efforts to have the decision re-evaluated and assure landowner that the County will continue to apply for additional instalments of the original grant.

December 7, 2020: Foothills County and the Town of High River sent a joint letter to Minister Jason Nixon indicating that they were working together to explore opportunities to leverage existing grant funding to support the Lower Highwood Flood Mitigation program. The Town and the County also indicated that the existing funding would likely fall short of funding the entire program and some of the funds will not be available for some time. As such they asked the Province to find a way to fund another installment of \$2,000,000 to enable the buy-out program to proceed in the interim. A grant application was attached to the letter.

January 20, 2021: Foothills County and the Town of High River received a response from Minister Jason Nixon indicating that the Government of Alberta appreciates the efforts and collaboration of the Town and the County on the Lower Highwood program, the provincial government is experiencing unprecedented financial challenges and as such are unable to consider additional funding at this time.