

Stewarding our Natural Assets



OUR VISION

The work we do today lays the foundation for a resilient, vibrant, and prosperous Region for future generations. Guided by our integrated growth plan, the EMRB promotes long-term sustainability through environmentally responsible growth, embedding a climate resiliency lens across all initiatives.

Climate Change Impacts

Climate change has far-reaching effects that go beyond municipal borders. It directly influences our natural and built environments, affecting the air we breathe, the integrity of our water sources, and our assets. Consider:

- Damage caused by natural disasters in Alberta in 2020 was roughly \$2.4B, with municipalities responsible for 10% of disaster response costs.
- More frequent and intense weather events increase the risk of flooding, impacting stormwater and other municipal infrastructure, risk to public safety, and cost of damages.
- Our Region is identified at a greater risk for invasive species, extreme heat, summer droughts, water shortages, wildfires, and flooding.
- If we continue this course, expected regional direct economic losses from climate change are estimated to amount to \$4B per year by the 2050s.

Regional Snapshot

The EMRB's 13 member municipalities span almost 9,500 km². Our Region offers a forested river valley and ravine slopes, deciduous woodlands, small rivers, and lakes, wetlands, and grasslands. We are proud to be home to:

- the North Saskatchewan River, which has its headwaters in the Columbia ice fields.
- a River Valley boasting an 88 km ribbon of green, extending from Devon to Fort Saskatchewan along the North Saskatchewan River, featuring roughly 150 km of trails—the largest urban park in North America, 22 times larger than New York's Central Park.
- the unique landscape of the Beaver Hills Biosphere, which is 1 of only 2 UNESCO-designated biospheres in Alberta.
- over 30% of the province's prime agricultural lands, a finite resource.



From Vision to Action

Understanding climate resiliency and the importance of safeguarding our natural assets is paramount. The benefits of actions to adapt to climate change exceed the costs of inaction. Here are some of the ways EMRB is stewarding the Region's natural assets:

- The **climate risk and vulnerability assessment** is the first comprehensive study undertaken in the Region. It looks at proactive measures that we can consider, to reduce the negative impacts of hazardous events and save money over the long term.
- Natural living systems and the environment are the foundations of a successful agriculture system. The **regional agriculture master plan (RAMP)** uses a custom **land evaluation site assessment (LESA)** tool to identify prime agricultural lands to conserve for as long as possible to enable positive environmental, economic, and social outcomes. It also looks at options to sustainably grow the agriculture and the agri-food industry sectors in the Region.
- The **solid waste action plan** envisions a zero-waste Region through a circular economy, emphasizing a coordinated approach to increase the overall effectiveness in reducing the amount of waste going to landfills and GHG emissions. Focusing on the waste hierarchy — reduce, rescue, reuse, recovery, and disposal — the EMRB has undertaken detailed waste studies on areas such as **regional organics** and **industrial commercial institutional (ICI) waste**, to provide a basis for informed decision-making, guiding the Region toward more effective management of waste.
- The **stormwater action plan** is a catalyst for advancing and building resilience against flooding and stormwater impacts. Through detailed studies and **flood mapping**, the Region can enhance its understanding, preparation, and mitigation of flood risks.

Future Forward: **A Region by Design**

The Region's built and natural assets are interconnected, underscoring the importance of applying a climate lens to enhance resilience and mitigate risks tied to growth. Successful climate adaptation necessitates collaboration among all levels of government, the private sector, and residents, with municipalities playing a pivotal role in this collective effort.

For more information about our work in stewarding our natural assets, visit emrb.ca/naturalassets