

# Taber Irrigation District

## Strategic Plan

2014-2035

February, 2014

## Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
TID SWOT Analysis .....	2
TID Values .....	5
Taber Irrigation District Vision .....	6
TID Goals and Objectives .....	7
<b>Goal #1: Provide the Best Possible Water Quality .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Goal #2: Improve Water Security .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Goal #3: Achieve the most effective and efficient water supply and distribution system possible .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Goal #4: Foster a Positive Health and Safety Culture .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Goal #5: Prevent and Introduction of Aquatic Invasive Species.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Goal #6: Be Prepared for an Introduction of Aquatic Invasive Species.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Goal #7: Optimize TID Human Resources for Efficiency, Resiliency and Productivity.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Goal #8: Build a Robust, Compatible, Flexible and Responsive Information Technology (IT) System     Appropriate to the Current and Forecasted Needs of TID.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Goal #9: Optimize TID Buildings and Yard.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Goal #10: Improve the Image of TID.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Goal #11: Set up a Financial Structure that Meets TID’s Forecasted Needs .....</b>	<b>11</b>

## Executive Summary

The Taber Irrigation District (TID) is approaching the end of the General Rehabilitation Plan (GRP). As we started to consider what work needed to be done we understood that the technology now available has changed significantly from when the GRP was last reviewed. Available pipe sizes have increased, along with the variety of materials and fabrication options. Canal lining, automation and communication systems have advanced significantly. Also, the terrain modeling, GPS survey and CAD technologies available to assist in design have expanded the scale and detail of planning. As we considered this, we began to realize that our irrigation works were a reflection of where we were as an organization. We were in good shape overall, but needed to take a fresh look at what we had and where we wanted to go.

As we entered discussions on long term strategic planning, we found we needed to better understand who we were and what was important to us – our values. To gain this perspective, we undertook a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) that asked both our neighbours and our staff to review who we were and where we should direct our efforts. In December 2013 the board and senior staff spent a day unplugged from our daily distractions to review the SWOT Analysis, identify our values and carve out some goals that we could work towards. The Visioning Retreat was followed up in January, 2014 with a Special Board Meeting to set timelines for meeting the individual objectives that will be used in tracking our progress in achieving our goals. Through all of this process, the board carried certain key values forward that were incorporated into TID's Vision Statement – defining how we want others to see us, as well as our Mission Statement – capturing our core responsibilities.

TID's Strategic Plan collects the results of the brainstorming, the honest discussions, collaborations and learnings into a single document, recognizing that it is more a direction than a destination. We will make mistakes along the way, and we will have setbacks. What we learned from this process however, is that we all have the best interests of our water users in mind.

I would like to thank all those who participated in the process, including the individuals and agencies that offered their advice, the ditchriders who graciously hosted me on our ride-alongs, the office staff who bantered ideas around with me, and our board who held nothing back. I look forward to the work ahead.

## TID SWOT Analysis

The acronym SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. A snapshot of the SWOT analysis will provide some context to the identification of our values and subsequent development of our Vision and Mission Statements, as well as to the establishment of our goals and objectives. Most observations relate directly to TID, but some apply to all irrigation districts or in conjunction with our partners.

The comments were categorized into one or more of 12 different headings. At our Visioning Retreat, the board and senior staff reviewed the comprehensive list of unedited, randomized comments with only the source name/agency or related identifiers removed. The key observations are as follows:

1. Location/Geography/Water Supply/Drainage
  - a. Strengths: compact, efficient, transportation corridor, growing conditions, soils, markets, water security
  - b. Weaknesses: low expansion potential, flat (reduced pipeline potential), small/shallow internal reservoirs
  - c. Opportunities: other water use, promote processing, integrate drainage solutions/services, collaborate on increased water storage / multi-use
  - d. Threats: external pressure on water availability, inability to store provincial entitlement climate extremes, storm water, drainage.
2. Infrastructure & Equipment
  - a. Strengths: efficient, compact, sized for expansion, signs of improvement
  - b. Weaknesses: old/manual technologies district-wide, limited management options, low spill capacity
  - c. Opportunities: planning ahead, add latest technology, take advantage of others' lessons, multi-benefit improvements, compatibility
  - d. Threats: unwillingness to change, fear of change, lack of planning, aquatic invasive species
3. Management – Vision & Planning
  - a. Strengths: water users first, support of water users, independent spirit, manageable size
  - b. Weaknesses: status quo, short term savings over long term value, no long term plan
  - c. Opportunities: momentum for change, well-positioned to be great, collaborative planning, develop a strategic plan
  - d. Threats: traditional thinking, limiting ourselves, inaccurate external perception, replacement of action with planning
4. Management – Operation
  - a. Strengths: small district with quick response to issues, flexibility, water users first
  - b. Weaknesses: safety culture, collaboration between office and shop, water tracking
  - c. Opportunities: improve communication/collaboration, integrate with office technology upgrades, improve payment options
  - d. Threats: expanded household/rural developments, data loss, water tracking during rationing
5. Management – Finances
  - a. Strengths: capital reserve, Irrican, surplus, low rates, look for value

- b. Weaknesses: infrastructure improvements lagging behind, cost of water delivery not reflected in rates, lack of planning
  - c. Opportunities: plan for value-added improvements, financial resources available to implement plans
  - d. Threats: losing track of water user needs, accumulated infrastructure deficit, water rates falling too far behind cost to operate, spending without adequate planning
6. Staff
- a. Strengths: stability, loyalty, dedication to water users
  - b. Weaknesses: conservative thinking, training/development is lagging behind, responsibility creep, demographics skewed toward retirement
  - c. Opportunities: training, goal-setting, advancement, cross-training, succession planning, building staff unity, improve communication, collaboration on common goals
  - d. Threats: stifled ideas, lack of training/knowledge, job market, influence of individuals with poor work ethic
7. Board
- a. Strengths: balance of experience/youth and family farm/agriculture business, direct, candid, engagement in wider perspective/committees
  - b. Weaknesses: need more engagement in ensuring district goals are put into action
  - c. Opportunities: use this momentum for change
  - d. Threats: reluctance to act
8. Water Users
- a. Strengths: progressive, knowledgeable, progressive, profitable, helped define TID, good to work with, supportive
  - b. Weaknesses: none identified
  - c. Opportunities: collaboration on understanding issues, promote value-added processing, extend to other water use
  - d. Threats: none identified
9. External – Collaboration
- a. Strengths: Irrican, main canal, AIPA, OWC, government departments, politicians
  - b. Weaknesses: communication/relationships weak in some areas and at some times, limited collaboration
  - c. Opportunities: develop partnerships to achieve common goals, mitigate conflict, add value to our water
  - d. Threats: lack of time/will, narrow thinking, government red tape, external issues, minority interests
10. External – Public Relations
- a. Strengths: location in hub of Specialty Crop Country, good sponsorship, strong heritage
  - b. Weaknesses: unprofessional image, no website, lack of PR plan, interaction/communication with water users at organizational level
  - c. Opportunities: website, key in on opportunities for public announcement/education, representation/promotion of TID in local sponsorship, multi-use benefits
  - d. Threats: lack of public understanding/awareness affects our social license to operate, oil and gas taking attention from water

## 11. Environmental

- a. Strengths: support of riparian management, OWC involvement, contribution to AIS prevention
- b. Weaknesses: water quality effects through TID, weed and algae issues, shallow reservoirs with low residence time,
- c. Opportunities: improve water quality through collaboration on studies and improving/adding infrastructure
- d. Threats: aquatic invasive species, chemical effects/availability, storm water and drainage

These observations were understood to be perceptions and not necessarily reality. In some cases we realized the issue was communication and in others it was a matter of documenting ideas or processes that were already in place. For the most part though, we see these as a candid view of TID and that we could use these as context for establishing our values, outlined in the next section.

## TID Values

The values of the Taber Irrigation District were generated after reviewing the external and internal SWOT analyses. These are the guiding beliefs that demonstrate what we, our water users and other stakeholders value most about how we achieve our mission, i.e. Who are we? How do we want to be seen? What is important to us?

Here is our condensed list of TID values:

### **Our Focus on Water Users**

We value the good relationships we have with our water users, knowing and understanding the diversity of problems and opportunities they face and being accountable to the direction they provide through their representatives on the Board of Directors.

### **Our Quality Product**

We value delivering a reliable supply of clean water in a timely manner.

### **Our Dedicated People**

We value having an engaged and progressive board and management, a strong work ethic in our staff and a spirit independence and self-determination.

### **Our Heritage**

We value the contributions of the irrigation pioneers from whose legacy we operate, and the sound decisions of previous board and staff that have built a strong foundation.

### **Our Efficient Operation**

We value fiscal responsibility, sustainability and maximizing efficiency and productivity in our operations with a hands-on, straightforward, no-nonsense management approach.

### **Our Partnerships**

We value our partnership with the SMRID main canal and Irrican, our role in regional economic development and drainage, our role in protecting and enhancing Alberta's water supply, and our relationships and shared goals with government.

### **Our Potential**

We value the economic, recreational, environmental and aesthetic properties that come with irrigation water, the advantages of size, location, high quality land and progressive water users we have in this region, and the potential of excellence at TID in becoming the best district we can be.

These values were considered as we crafted the following Vision Statement – defining how we want others to see us, as well as our Mission Statement – capturing our core responsibilities.

# Taber Irrigation District Vision

## TID Vision

*Our vision is a progressive and cohesive team, supporting the diverse needs of our water users through a heritage of efficient operations, a drive for continuous improvement, and a spirit of collaboration toward responsible water management within Specialty Crop Country*

\*\*\*\*\*

## TID Mission Statement

*Our mission is to provide sufficient, quality water to our rate payers through collaborative planning, regular upgrading, proactive maintenance and cost-effective operation, enabled by an informed board and dedicated staff using sustainable management practices*

## TID Goals and Objectives

The Vision and Mission statements give TID the overarching guidance for preparing the more specific goals and objectives. The goals present the broad, long-term activities that we will be working on and the objectives give short-term, specific targets to aim for in achieving these goals. Here are the eleven goals for TID, the subsequent objectives and the timelines we are starting out with:

### Goal #1: Provide the Best Possible Water Quality

	Objective	Timeline
1.1	Understand our water quality by designing and implementing a water quality monitoring program to identify sources of pollution	2014 - 2020
1.2	Improve water quality throughout the district through a surface water pollution mitigation program that will prioritize problems, collaborate to improve land management and stormwater control, develop administrative tools such as proactive runoff conveyance agreements, and install engineered solutions such as holding ponds, controlled drain inlets, and integrated water treatment structures/processes into drains and reservoirs	2015 - 2020
1.3	Improve water quality at the point of delivery through an aquatic weed and algae control program that installs treatment structures at pipeline inlets through IRP funding and at individual farm turnouts through cost recovery	2015 - 2017

### Goal #2: Improve Water Security

	Objective	Timeline
2.1	Lobby government, collaborate with partners, and participate actively in consultations and hydrologic modelling studies toward increasing storage and improving water management in the region	ongoing
2.2	Investigate the opportunities to improve storage and water management of district-owned infrastructure in collaboration with SMRID	2014 - 2015
2.3	Develop a plan, including funding strategies, to facilitate the installation of on-farm storage to allow both earlier access to water and seasonal re-allocation of water volume while integrating potential low impact drainage practices	2015

**Goal #3: Achieve the most effective and efficient water supply and distribution system possible**

	Objective	Timeline
3.1	Understand the potential for conveyance infrastructure and water management for the district through completion of a Long Term Infrastructure Plan	2014
3.2	Convert all technically and economically feasible conveyance systems to buried pipeline	2014 - 2035
3.3	Rehabilitate and/or retrofit all permanent canal systems as appropriate with gates, controls, communication and automation systems to optimal benefit	2014 - 2025

**Goal #4: Foster a Positive Health and Safety Culture**

	Objective	Timeline
4.1	Review, revise and implement an effective Health & Safety Program for employees, including industry requirements for training, seasonal safety meetings, weekly tailgate meetings (construction), provision of industry standard PPE/Guards/Tools, completion of hazard assessments and design of safe work practices and policies	2014 - 2015
4.2	Promote Health and Safety in the actions and decisions of the Board and senior staff, posting current safety targets, and making health and safety priorities visible to the public and government	2014 - 2015
4.3	Conduct an assessment of, and prioritize where, our irrigation infrastructure may affect public safety	2015

**Goal #5: Prevent an Introduction of Aquatic Invasive Species**

	Objective	Timeline
5.1	Participate in the current programs to inform and educate the public about how AIS could affect irrigated agriculture, and extend to our local region	ongoing
5.2	Participate in the monitoring program spearheaded by Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development at the district level through training of staff, installation of mussel substrates, inspection and reporting of results, and collaboration with our upstream water neighbours	2014 - ongoing
5.3	Advocate for and support provincial initiatives for AIS prevention, including emergency preparedness, through ongoing participation in stakeholder consultations and committees, lobbying government for related legislation and jurisdictional control measures, and public awareness	2014 - ongoing

## Goal #6: Be Prepared for an Introduction of Aquatic Invasive Species

	Objective	Timeline
6.1	Maintain a communication link with the provincial AIS program to ensure we are informed of the first indication of AIS introduction in southern Alberta	2014 - ongoing
6.2	In collaboration with other agencies, investigate, build and maintain a list of the current options to treat AIS, in particular Zebra & Quagga mussels, within our conveyance systems	2014 - ongoing
6.3	In collaboration with other agencies, develop a mussel containment and treatment plan that includes lining up off-the-shelf practical solutions, license requirements for chemicals/agents, resource requirements and lead time	2014 - 2015

## Goal #7: Optimize TID Human Resources for Efficiency, Resiliency and Productivity

	Objective	Timeline
7.1	Complete work/task analyses to identify inefficiencies, redundancies, gaps and opportunities, and determine the human resources needed to efficiently meet the goals of each department with minimal accumulation of overtime	2014
7.2	Re-allocate staff time, re-assign staff, revise job descriptions and/or hire new people as needed to reflect the recommendations of the work/task analysis for each department	2014
7.3	Review and update the work/task analysis annually to maintain efficiency and avoid responsibility drift	ongoing
7.4	Develop a succession plan for all staff positions as a means to prepare for retirement or loss of personnel	2014
7.5	Complete cross-training for similar or complementary positions to allow for flexibility in time off and potential succession.	2014
7.6	Host regular staff information-sharing meetings, get-togethers, recognition events, intra-departmental awareness activities, etc. to gain a better understanding of how our own work relates to rest of the district operations, and help foster a sense of pride in working in the TID	2014 – ongoing
7.7	Design or select, and implement a graduated system of documentation and follow-up to ensure accountability of staff time and/or performance measures as appropriate to each position	2014
7.8	Provide incentives for bringing special/value-added skills to the TID such as a remuneration adjustment, special recognition, special projects, etc.	2014

**Goal #8: Build a Robust, Compatible, Flexible and Responsive Information Technology (IT) System Appropriate to the Current and Forecasted Needs of TID**

	Objective	Timeline
8.1	Making use of available resources, including the consultant awarded the Long Term Infrastructure Plan, determine TID's current and forecasted IT needs	2014
8.2	Conduct a thorough review of the options for procurement of IT equipment, software and maintenance to meet our current and forecasted needs	2014
8.3	Procure the currently needed central information system (eg. network server), office computers, boardroom projection/screen system, and network peripherals (eg. printers, copier)	2014
8.4	Provide training for staff to operate the above equipment and software	2014
8.5	Procure any additional equipment and software as selected from the Long Term Infrastructure Plan, including potential items such as water delivery tracking tools, reservoir level tracking, return flow tracking, and/or remote flow/gate communication and controls	2014 - 2016
8.6	Provide training for staff to operate the above equipment and software	2014 - 2016
8.7	Design and implement a secure TID website that is simple for our water users to navigate and will allow easy updating of items such as contacts, current events and activities, and basic information and maps	2014

**Goal #9: Optimize TID Buildings and Yard**

	Objective	Timeline
9.1	Complete an inventory of materials and sort by current/recommended storage (indoor/outdoor), useable/obsolete and access requirements	2014
9.2	Assess the forecasted needs for indoor building use and outdoor yard space based on the Long Term Infrastructure Plan, projected maintenance requirements and the human resources work/task analysis, and identify gaps and inefficiencies	2014
9.3	Collaborate with shop personnel and suppliers/consultants to design an office/maintenance/manufacturing/supply/storage/yard layout to meet forecasted needs, while making best use of existing permanent structures	2014 – 2015
9.4	Complete the recommended renovations and construction	2014-2018

## Goal #10: Improve the Image of TID

	Objective	Timeline
10.1	Design, construct and install new signs that reflect our Vision Statement	2014
10.2	TID website (see Goal 8, Objective 7)	2014
10.3	Design, order, and apply new decals for trucks and equipment that reflect our Vision Statement	2014
10.4	Maximize recognition as we engage in or otherwise support community projects through attitude and advertisement of new website (when on line)	ongoing
10.5	Pro-actively participate in government and other agency lobbying, consultations and committees with promotion of TID's Vision	ongoing
10.6	Make effective use of Media to assist in promotion of TID's Vision by submitting at least 2 story ideas per year to newspapers and television	2014 – ongoing
10.7	Collaborate with MD, provincial government, grower associations, individual farmers and processors to promote the region for increasing value-added specialty crop development	2014 – ongoing

## Goal #11: Set up a Financial Structure that Meets TID's Forecasted Needs

	Objective	Timeline
11.1	Investigate, develop and present funding/financing structure options that evaluate a spectrum of approaches for Board consideration	2014
11.2	Choose a sustainable course for recommendation to water users	2014