

Great West Beef looking good

A beef packing plant in the Southwest is looking more like a reality than a dream.

Members of the southwest beef initiative have chosen Regina-based Derek Murray Consulting to complete the first part of a feasibility study.

The \$40,000 study will assess the proposed facility's location and size. It will also address governance issues such as shares, investments and how to set up the board.

Rural Municipality of Swift Current Reeve Jim Parsons heads the committee and said Murray's firm was one of three that submitted applications for the job.

"(Murray) is deemed very reliable so that's why we picked him," Parsons said of the Regina-based firm.

South West Beef Initiative spokesperson Karen Bonesky indicated Tuesday that they were going to talk to Murray, but stated everything was "proceeding on target" in regards to the study. It's expected the first portion of the study will be done before the end of December.

Markets, suppliers, land availability and those areas will be just a few of the aspects that will be examined.

The initiative received a \$25,000 federal grant for the study from the Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development Program in Saskatchewan (CARDS).

The second part of the feasibility study will be a business plan. Six graduate students and a professor from the First Nations University of Canada will complete the number crunching.

Roland Crowe, a committee-representative from the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), said it's a great opportunity for the students.

"It was a good mix of giving them practical experience and saving some costs

for us to get some of the work done," Crowe said.

Richard Missens, a professor at the university's school of business, will supervise the students.

The business plan will assess operational costs and other expenses.

Parsons said both parts of the study are expected to be complete by mid-December.

"We should have a very good idea then where we're at then we'll make decisions from there," he said.

Considering meat processing facilities are going to be built in Pincher Creek and north of Calgary, one would think there would be a rush to get the local project built. However, Bonesky said the group won't cut corners to get things done quicker.

"Right from the start we've said that we're going to build a sustainable plan and we know that takes some time. We're going to stay the course on this one. We're going to do what we need to do every step of the way," said Bonesky who said the support and commitment is there.

Recently Parsons officially presented the \$10,000 cheque to Ted Dupmeier, treasurer, and Bryce Burnett, producer representative for the Southwest Beef Initiative Committee. In addition, this week Dupmeier was presented with a cheque in the amount of \$5,000 from the Credit Unions of Southwest Saskatchewan.

The Credit Unions of Southwest Saskatchewan include: Cypress, Eastend, Herbert, Fox Valley, Lafleche, Mankota, Mendham-Burstall, Morse, Rockglen-Killdeer, Sandhills, Shaunavon, and Southwest Credit Union.

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