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County of Grande Prairie exploring subleasing lands to PARDS

A new lease on life has been granted to a problem area of the County as the Province of Alberta grants authority of the lands adjacent to the Pine Valley South subdivision to the County of Grande Prairie.

“With this land disposition in place, we can ensure proper management of the lands to the benefit of the community,” said Reeve Leanne Beaupre.

For several years, the County of Grande Prairie has had to deal with complaints including dumping of garbage and campfires left burning unattended, with the potential to cause significant threat to the surrounding area. Methods to deal with pine beetle infestation increased the access – and threat – to the area.

“The presence of pine beetles required aggressive measures, including removal of infested trees,” said Beaupre. “Despite our efforts to restrict access to the area, the tree removal provided more opportunities for people to enter the site, creating more hazards to the area and the surrounding community.”

Along with pine beetles, the area was considered a “red zone,” meaning the conditions deemed it a significant fire hazard, and human activities were causing significant concern to the County and local residents.

“Residents along with RCMP and our own enforcement services personnel have found many unattended campfires in the area, which could easily have caused a wildfire given the conditions in the area,” said Beaupre.

Despite the troubled past, there is a bright future for the area as the County has applied to the Province for approval to sublease the lands to Peace Riding for the Disabled (PARDS), which offers therapeutic programs for children and adults with a clinical diagnosis.

“Because of the fire hazard, we knew this area was not appropriate for recreational activities such as off-highway vehicles, which is why we are encouraging people to go to Dunes staging area instead,” said Beaupre. “This is a beautiful area for walking as well as horseback riding, which is why our thoughts immediately went to PARDS.

“PARDS is very excited to have access to extended trails for the benefit of our riders,” said Jennifer Douglas, Executive Director of PARDS. “The area provides a safe and controlled space for our riders to experience horsemanship in a natural environment. The area has long been popular for walking and trail riding and we look forward to welcoming our friends and neighbours in their continued enjoyment of the area.”



The County of Grande Prairie will also be addressing local resident concerns by installing further barriers to restrict access, increasing patrols, and adding signage confirming approved uses of the lands. Subleasing the land to PARDS will allow the organization to expand as well as assist in wildfire mitigation efforts.

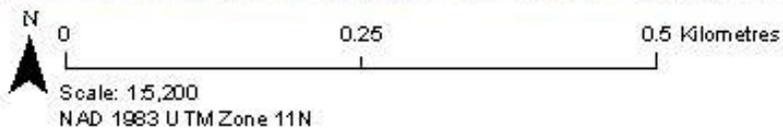
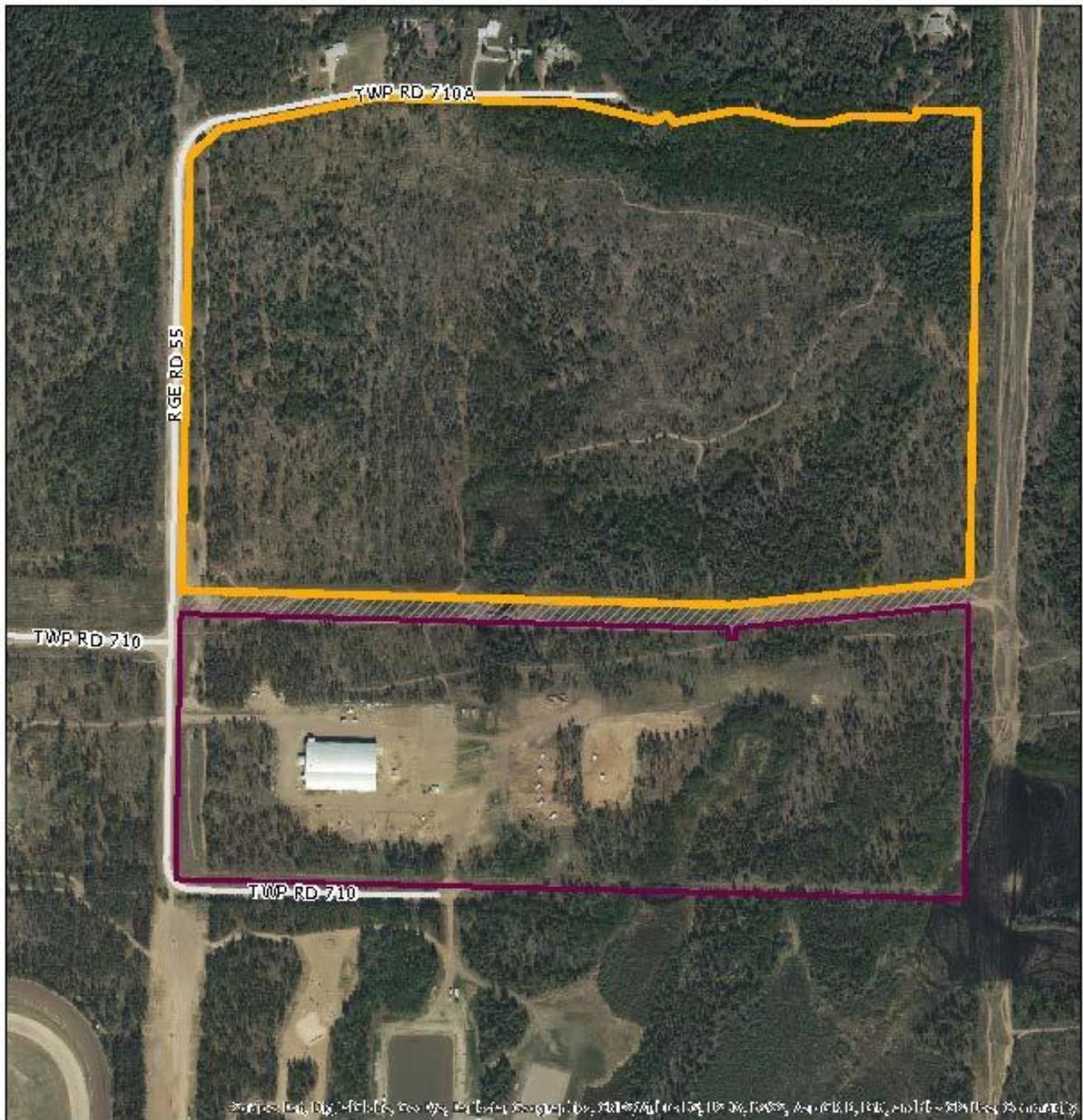
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-  Proposed sublease to PARDS
-  Existing PARDS Site
-  Powerline
-  Roads