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VEGETATION MANAGER *magazine* 2026

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Environmental Advocacy, Utility Training and Certification -

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 **PVMA**
PROFESSIONAL VEGETATION MANAGERS ASSOCIATION

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT



- LISA RYBCHUK, PRESIDENT PVMA



As of February 24, 2026, I will be stepping down from my position of President, having completed the final year of the maximum six consecutive years on the Board of Directors. I am honoured to have served as President for five of those six years and I am deeply grateful for the trust, support, and confidence you have placed in me throughout this journey.

I look forward to my continued involvement with the PVMA as Past President and will always remain the Association's biggest fan! Over the years, I have seen many changes, each a testament to the strength of our organization and the meaningful commitment of our members, elected leaders, and staff. I'm incredibly proud of the work accomplished during my tenure and would like to share some of the highlights of the past six years.

Expanded Educational Offerings

- Hosted 12 virtual and in-person conferences over 17 days, delivering 64 credit-earning presentations and countless networking opportunities.
- Offered free or subsidized conferences through generous sponsorship and casino funding to ensure events remained accessible, affordable and valuable.

Modernized Processes

- Embraced technology through the use of high-quality virtual platforms, QR codes, and App development (in progress) to ensure uninterrupted access to education, networking, and secure document sharing.
- Modernized the UTT/UTW training with a blended delivery model combining online instruction with in-person field evaluations to preserve training integrity and safety

Collaborative efforts

- Celebrated 45 years of industry leadership, highlighting the evolution from IVMAA (1978) to PVMA and a growing, more diverse membership base.
- Strengthened partnerships with allied organizations with IVMA Man/Sask, Utility Arborist Association (UAA), Utility Vegetation Management Association (UVMA), Alberta Invasive Species Council (AISC), Alberta Association of Agricultural Fieldmen (AAAF) and other vegetation management associations.
- Provided administrative support to IVMA Man/Sask, while exploring future inter-provincial collaboration
- Represented the PVMA at the IVMA-BC Biennial Conference (2025)

- Represented the PVMA at the Alberta Government Industrial Pesticide Advisory Committee meetings

Advocacy & Government Engagement

Strengthened its role as a trusted industry advocate, engaging with:

- Alberta Municipal Affairs and Occupational Health & Safety on regulatory changes affecting the UTT/UTW program
- Alberta Advanced Education regarding accreditation and trade designation pathways
- Alberta Environment and Protected Areas on pesticide regulation and compliance

Certification and Workforce Development

- Advanced the UTT/UTW trade designation initiative, engaging with external consultants, employers, workers, and representatives within Alberta's Skilled Trades framework.
- Increased PVMA's presence at career fairs and tradeshow
- Expanded annual financial support to members, including five \$2000 PVMA Scholarships, multiple \$500 bursaries, and a \$4000 Keith Sanftleben Memorial Scholarship.

Transparency and Leadership

- Hired Executive Director, Joanne Ireland, to sustain momentum, strengthen operations, and publicly advocate for the vegetation management industry
- Conducted a comprehensive Bylaw review to modernize language, update legacy references, and reinforce transparency and accountability.
- Updated the Guidelines for the PVMA Directors and Committee Chairs, along with the Conference Committee Handbook
- Initiated the legal process to Trademark the PVMA name and logo
- Celebrated the 10-year work anniversary of PVMA Office Manager, Val Eichelt!

The list represents only a portion of what has been achieved. PVMA's success is rooted in its strong culture of volunteerism, from the Board of Directors and committee members to casual volunteers, they each play a vital role in advancing the Association.

Because of this collective commitment, the PVMA continues to strengthen its position as a trusted leader and advocate for Alberta's vegetation management industry and is well-positioned for continued success in the years ahead.

With humble gratitude,

- Lisa Rybchuk, Outgoing President, PVMA

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WITH COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE
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Val Eichelt - PVMA



Save The Date!

PVMA FALL SEMINAR:

OCTOBER 26/27, 2026 @ Red Deer Resort & Casino

Optional field training session on electrical awareness will be offered at the Fortis Training Center on the afternoon (Oct 26th) preceding the conference

PVMA SPRING CONFERENCE & TRADESHOW

February 23-25, 2027 @ River Cree Resort & Casino

Advantage VM CELEBRATES 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS +

AdvantageVM is celebrating its 10th anniversary as a trusted provider in Canada's vegetation management industry.

Founded in 2016, AdvantageVM is a Canadian-owned pesticide distribution company servicing the vegetation management industry. With an emphasis on providing solid advice and experience to the VM industry, they offer individualized sales consultations, exceptional customer service, and reliable delivery of goods. The company has grown to serve clients nationwide, earning a reputation for its commitment, honesty, expertise and personalized service.

Owners Julie Dixon and Geoff Thompson, along with their team, bring more than 100 years of combined experience in the application, sales and marketing of herbicides, and actively engage with within industry associations and events across the country.

“ We believe in the importance of excellent customer service and solid communication, and we are committed to both our customers and the industry,” said Dixon, president of AdvantageVM.

AdvantageVM's growth has been supported by the addition of key team members. Chad Horton joined in 2021 to support sales and service across Eastern Canada, bringing a passion for the industry and a focus on practical, effective solutions. That same year, Margaret Thompson added her 22 years of industry experience to Accounts Payable

& Receivable. In 2024, Kelly Malmberg brought 32 years of experience as an Agricultural Fieldman to the team in Western Canada and Paxton Legault-Chicoine joined to support in Office Administration and Customer Service. Dayna Horgan came aboard in 2025 as marketing and customer experience manager, contributing more than two decades of experience in agriculture, communications and customer engagement. About AdvantageVM

“ Our dedication to the industry, to the communities where we live and work, and our team's collective vegetation management expertise truly set us apart,” said Thompson, vice president. “Our staff consistently go the extra mile to make every customer experience a positive one.”

ABOUT ADVANTAGEVM

AdvantageVM partners with innovative manufacturers of premium vegetation management products, and services the sale and distribution of herbicides for use across Canada. From railways and roadsides to right-of-ways and industrial sites, the company helps clients find the solutions that best fit their needs.



Advantage VM

This year and every year, thank you to all our amazing customers for standing with us. Your trust, loyalty, and partnership are at the heart of everything we do at AdvantageVM and we couldn't be more grateful.

We look forward to continuing strong together in 2026!



Founded in 2016, AdvantageVM occupies a niche in the Vegetation Management Industry: our combination of individualized service, industry knowledge, and willingness to put the work in differentiates us from the competition. Whether you need herbicides for railways, roadsides, right-of-way, or industrial use we can help you find the products that will best meet your needs.

With years of experience in Vegetation Management, our team brings unmatched expertise and a commitment to delivering high-quality service you can count on.



CONTACT US 1-888-560-5595 or at info@advantagevm.ca today to get started!

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SAFETY ON THE ROAD

- SUBMITTED BY DONALD WALTERS

Road and traffic safety become especially important during the winter and spring seasons, when changing weather and road conditions can create serious hazards for drivers. Understanding these risks and adjusting behavior accordingly can help prevent accidents and save lives.

During winter, cold temperatures often bring snow, ice, and freezing rain. These conditions reduce tire traction, increase stopping distances, and limit visibility. Drivers should slow down, increase the distance between vehicles, and avoid sudden braking or sharp turns. Use winter tires, four-wheel drive and/or tire chains in extreme conditions. Keeping all lights on, and ensuring windshields, mirrors, and lights are clear of snow and ice (especially with all the winter road slop) are essential safety measures. Crew members should wear high visible clothing and have ice cleats on icy areas.

Spring presents a different set of challenges. As temperatures rise, melting snow can lead to wet roads, potholes, and flooding. Rain reduces visibility and makes roads slippery. Drivers should be alert for standing water that can cause hydroplaning and be cautious of damaged road surfaces. Spring is also a time when more pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists return to the roads, increasing traffic complexity. Sharing the road and staying attentive is critical.

Additionally, spring weather can change quickly, with sudden rain, fog, or late-season frost. Regular vehicle inspections, maintenance, including checking brakes, tires, and wipers, helps ensure readiness for these conditions. Fatigue can also increase with the changing time and lighting conditions, so staying focused remains vital.

By adapting driving habits to seasonal conditions, staying informed about weather forecasts, and respecting all road users, everyone can contribute to safer roads during winter and spring. Road safety is a shared responsibility both on the job or off duty, and awareness is the first step toward prevention.



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SOIL STERILANT REMEDIATION

- SUBMITTED BY JASON PENTLAND, M.SC., P.ENG. SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEER – MONTROSE ENVIRONMENTAL SOLUTIONS CANADA INC.

Soil sterilants are a group of long-lasting herbicides that have been used for non-selective vegetation control at critical infrastructure and industrial locations to maintain bare earth conditions. Products that contained the active ingredients bromacil, tebuthiuron, atrazine, simazine, diuron, and linuron were historically used. Sterilants were applied routinely at these sites over decades, often annually, and when the sites have moved to closure and reclamation, concentrations of the sterilants have been detected at concentrations above environmental quality guidelines in soil and groundwater resulting in the need for extensive environmental remediation.

The Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act (EPEA) requires land to be decontaminated prior to issuing certification to operators documenting that environmental risk at a site has been appropriately managed to levels protective of human and environmental health. Soil and groundwater concentrations of chemicals that are a potential risk are outlined in the Alberta Tier 1 and 2 Soil and Groundwater Remediation Guidelines (the Tier 1 and 2 Guideline) developed by Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (AEPA). AEPA has included guidelines for soil sterilants starting in 2007.

Soil sterilants have posed issues for site remediation and reclamation for several reasons. The guideline values that AEPA has established in the Tier 1 and 2 Guidelines were set at low values to be protective of irrigation watering that needs to be considered for land being returned to agricultural land use. The plant species considered in the guideline development are more sensitive to the chemicals compared to crops typically grown in Alberta, resulting in conservative guideline values. Coupled with slower rates of degradation of the sterilants in the environment than expected, and high mobility of the substances in soil and groundwater remediation requirements are often extensive.

At utility sites, such as electrical substations or natural gas distribution gate stations, soil sterilants are often the only contaminant of concern requiring remediation to meet guideline values. At other industrial sites, other contaminants

such as salinity or hydrocarbon parameters dictate remediation requirements, but operators and consultants should also consider past sterilant use when developing site assessment program.

Typically, sterilant impacted sites have been remediated using a 'dig and dump' technique involving excavating impacted soil and sending to a landfill for disposal. Clean soil is then brought in to replace the excavated soil and the surface is reclaimed to an appropriated standard. Dig and dump remediation is costly and not a sustainable option for dealing with environmental contamination as it creates large volumes of waste and greenhouse gas emissions from equipment operations.

To find new ways to manage sterilant impact sites, industry participants partnered with InnoTech Alberta to conduct a multi-year research program on bromacil and tebuthiuron, which have been found to be the most widespread soil sterilants above guideline. The program consisted of 14 separate research projects grouped into broad categories related to identification and delineation of sterilant impacts in soil and groundwater, risk assessment and management to reduce the number and size of sites requiring remediation and alternate remediation methods to reduce the number of sites remediated using the 'dig and dump' remediation approach.

Results of the program were mixed. Some alternative remediation techniques showed promise, but require full field scale trials to confirm they are practical and economical to implement. Risk assessment options were found to be limited due to requirements under the Tier 1 and 2 Guidelines limiting options for modifying guideline values.

The final synthesis report summarizing the research program is publicly available on the Canadian Conservation and Land Management (CCLM) Knowledge Network portal at cclmportal.ca and searching for "soil sterilants".



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EFFECTIVE PESTICIDE DISCUSSION

- SUBMITTED BY VIVIANNE SERVANT

Effective Pesticide Discussions with the Public
Pesticide applicators should download or bookmark documents that are helpful to educate the public regarding pesticide use. The following information should also be discussed with their assistants:

a. Industry documents describing why pesticide applications are necessary (e.g. <https://www.pvma.ca>).

b. Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) factsheets outlining how they regulate pesticides <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/consumer-product-safety/reports-publications/pesticides-pest-management/fact-sheets-other-resources.html>

c. IPM approaches to controlling pests, including advantages and disadvantages.

d. PMRA proposed registration/re-evaluation and decision documents for the pesticides they use <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/consumer-product-safety/reports-publications/pesticides-pest-management/decisions-updates.html>.

e. Copies of pesticide labels.

f. PMRA pesticide incident rates (10% of incidents are caused by certified applicators and 80% are caused by untrained public). <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/consumer-product-safety/reports-publications/pesticides-pest-management/corporate-plans-reports.html>

These steps can be used when approached by a concerned individual:

1. Stop spraying, remove PPE and move to a safe area to have the conversation!
2. Listen and try to understand their concerns.
3. Repeat their concerns back to them with empathy. (e.g. "I hear you believe pesticides can cause health issues to children. I am also concerned about children's health!")

4. Share factsheets that identify PMRA's main goal in regulating pesticides is the protect the health of Canadians. (e.g. Figure 1).

5. Show them the precautions on the pesticide label that protect bystanders and the environment.

6. Review the PMRA registration documents with them. They contain the best available information on the pesticides being used.

7. Highly stressed or emotional persons who believe an adverse effect will occur, can be referred to:

• **PMRA - 1-800-267-6315**

• **Alberta Environment and Protected Areas - 1-800-222-6514.**

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Pesticides help manage native and invasive pests that threaten Canada's natural resources, crops and gardens.

Health Canada scientists evaluate hundreds of lab and field studies as part of a thorough science-based risk assessment. They look at the potential effects pesticides can have on a wide variety of animals, plants and insects.

Health Canada scientists also look at pesticide exposure in the environment, including when, where and how much pesticides can come into contact with plants and wildlife.

They then determine the potential level of risk to the environment and the best way to manage these risks by restricting how, where, when and if a pesticide can be used.

Before using a pesticide, always read the label and check for the registration number to make sure the product is authorized for use by Health Canada.

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For more information, go to [canada.ca/pesticides](https://www.canada.ca/pesticides)

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PVMA 2025 FALL CONFERENCE AND GM

- SUBMITTED BY JOANNE IRELAND

The PVMA 2025 Fall Workshop and General Meeting was once again held at i-Hotel in Red Deer, October 23, 2025.

Our first speaker, James Beery of Wright Tree delivered a presentation on the challenges and wins initiating Human and Organizational Performance (HOP) in the safety culture. James' presentation explored HOP's history, its advantages over traditional safety, key principles, and practical ways to integrate HOP into current programs. He was able to offer ways to engage workers, encourage psychological safety, and promote accountability and fitness. He concluded the presentation with insight to the future direction of HOP.

After a short networking break, our next speaker, Dr. Ken Fry from Olds College gave attendees a presentation on Emerald Ash Borer. His session covered the arrival and spread of Emerald Ash Borer in North America and Canada and included the insect's biology, damage indicators, and monitoring methods Dr. Fry ended with preparedness and prevention strategies.

Our general meeting was held after lunch, which included the review of the spring 2025 meeting minutes, reports from officers and committee reports. Updates to PVMA Bylaws was also presented to the group as a special resolution and approved via member voting.

Our final speaker, Jason Pentland of Montrose Environmental Solutions Canada, and Zhongzhi Chen of InnoTech Alberta, delivered a joint presentation spoke about soil sterilant remediation at utility sites. Jason's presentation focused on addressing soil sterilant contamination, specifically from bromacil and tebuthiuron, found at utility sites due to past herbicide use. It covered the challenges in detecting and remediating these chemicals and highlighted alternative management strategies developed through Innotech Alberta research.

PVMA would like to thank our sponsors, tradeshow participants and attendees for their support. We hope you enjoyed the day and look forward to seeing you all at the next one.



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NEW CODE OF PRACTICE FOR PESTICIDES

- SUBMITTED BY ALBERTA ENVIRONMENT

As of January 2025, the Environmental Code of Practice for Pesticides was updated to include broader provisions for the control of aquatic invasive species.

Previously the Code only allowed for the treatment of purple loosestrife, growing on dry land, with glyphosate or triclopyr. The new Code update now allows for the treatment of any invasive aquatic weeds growing on dry land, listed in the Weed Control Act or Fisheries (Alberta) Act, with any pesticide that includes both the species and use location on the federal pest control products label.

SECTION 18(5) STATES;

“Unless otherwise specified in the manufacturer’s product label, applicators may apply herbicides for specific vegetation management situations as follows:

(a) Invasive aquatic weeds named under the Weed Control Act or Fisheries (Alberta) Act may be treated with a herbicide registered for both the pest and use location and applied selectively by backpack or hand-pump sprayer to the targeted weed growing on dry land provided that:

(i) no herbicide is deposited closer than 1 horizontal metre from standing water; and

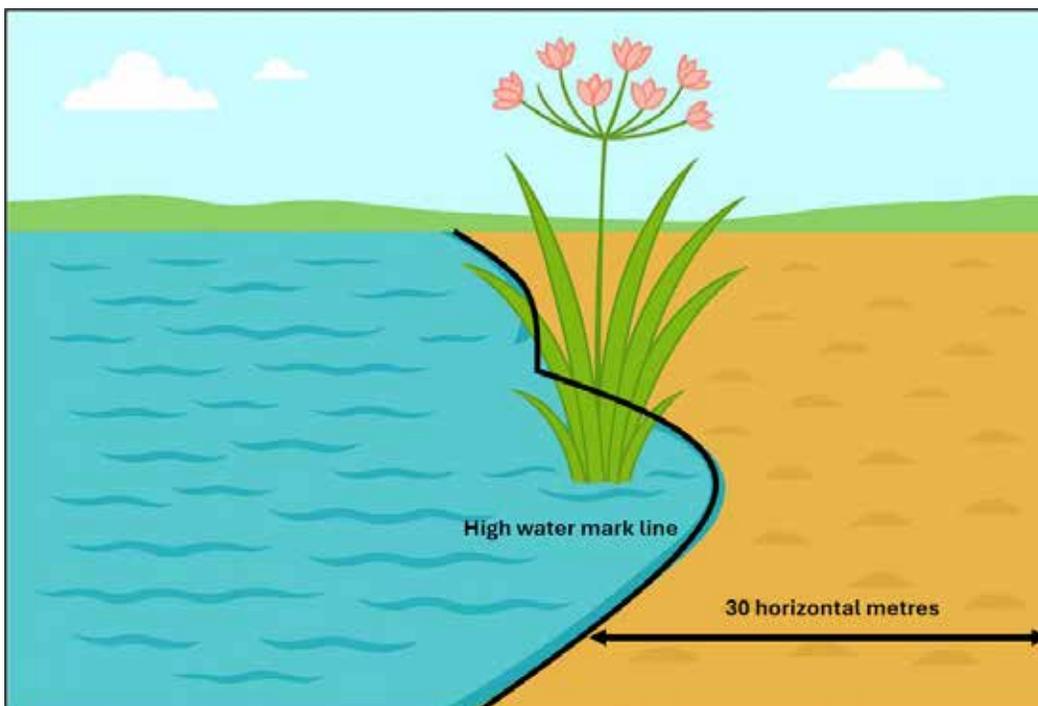
(ii) no more than 10 per cent of any 100 square metres in the zone 1-5 metres from an open body of water receives treatment in any calendar year.”

As with most legislation, it might be easier to explain the new rules with pictures! Before we get to the visuals a quick note on certification.

In order to apply a pesticide to treat an aquatic invasive species on dry land an applicator would need to hold a certificate appropriate to the use location. If the dry land is located:

- along a right of way, such as a railway, road, powerline, the applicator requires the industrial class.
- within forested land, the applicator requires the forestry class.
- in an area such as a park or residential area, the applicator requires the landscape class.
- In an agricultural area surrounded by cropland, the applicator requires the agricultural class.

As a note, all applicators to treat aquatic invasive species in water would require the applicator to hold the aquatic vegetation class of applicator certificate.



THIS PICTURE SHOWS A CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES. HERE, FLOWERING RUSH IS LOCATED IN THE WATER. IN THIS CASE, YOU COULD NOT USE THE NEW CODE PROVISIONS. IN ORDER TO APPLY PESTICIDES WITHIN AN OPEN BODY OF WATER YOU WOULD NEED TO APPLY FOR A SPECIAL USE APPROVAL.

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IT IS IMPORTANT TO CONTACT A PROCTOR ASAP TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT.

UTILITY TREE WORKER AND UTILITY TREE TRIMMER RECERTIFICATION

ONLINE DATES: MARCH 9-20, 2026 | APRIL 13-24, 2026
IN-PERSON SESSIONS: APRIL 15-16, 2026

VISIT WWW.PVMA.CA/COURSE-OFFERINGS FOR MORE INFORMATION



Thank you to
Lisa Rybchuk
for serving on
the PVMA Board
the past 6 years,
with 5 of those in
the President role.

You led with excellence, facilitating many conferences, updates, and new projects. Well done!

Help keep Alberta Dutch Elm Disease free.

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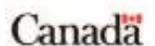
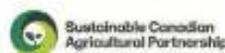
A single piece of firewood can destroy millions of trees.
Moving firewood, even just a few kilometres away, can spread
invasive insects and diseases to our forests.



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CREATING SOLUTIONS: INNOTECH ALBERTA'S SOIL STERILANTS PROGRAM

- THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINAL PUBLISHED AUGUST 27TH ON THE INNOTECH WEBSITE AND HAS BEEN SHARED WITH THEIR PERMISSION.



WHAT ARE SOIL STERILANTS AND WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM?

Soil sterilants are herbicides that were widely used in Alberta to keep industrial sites free of vegetation. The problem is, they don't just disappear. They may stay in the soil for decades and even move off-site through water or even wind.

InnoTech Alberta launched a five-year Soil Sterilants Program, co-funded by industry and government, to replace guesswork with science.

“The goal was to close knowledge gaps, find cost-effective strategies for detection and remediation, and ultimately support regulators and industry with sound evidence for land reclamation and site closure,” said Zhongzhi Chen, researcher at InnoTech Alberta. “This program stands on years of effort by Bonnie Drowzdowski, Victor Bachmann, and the work of InnoTech Alberta teams in Vegreville who took the science from the lab to field scale demonstrations.

PROGRAM IMPACT

Alberta now has clear, science-based guidance for sterilant remediation because of the Program. Industry can pinpoint and measure sterilants more accurately, regulators can make smarter, risk-based decisions, and communities benefit from safer land and water. Instead of one-size-fits-all fixes, the program paves the way for precision approaches—saving costs, protecting ecosystems, and setting a new benchmark for how Alberta manages contaminated sites.

The program also significantly advanced InnoTech Alberta's expertise, especially in applied chemistry analysis, risk evaluation and remediation.

“Our Applied Chemistry Services team in Vegreville led the lab method development, while our environmental impacts team took the science into the field,” Chen noted. “It showed what InnoTech Alberta does best—turning complex science into practical solutions.”



Marshall McKenzie, Senior Research Technologist, InnoTech Alberta, adding water to the moisture regime treatments by pouring buckets of water on the piles at InnoTech Vegreville facility.

Improved detection, smarter remediation, and fewer wasted resources are the benefits for industry dealing with sterilant impacted sites.

“The old approach might be to over-dig and over-spend,” Chen said. “Now, industry can use our methods to improve environmental site assessments while improving risk assessment and management.” An example of this would be how to determine what risks the site has to groundwater and off-site receptors, and how to exclude or protect these offsite receptors.

VALUE FOR ALBERTANS

This isn't just about industry efficiency—it's also about Albertans.

“By improving how we detect and manage sterilants, we're making land safer for communities and preventing contamination of water resources,” Chen explained. “And when we avoid unnecessary remediation, we're saving costs for both taxpayers and industry. It's a win on every front.”

FUTURE OUTLOOK

Looking ahead, the program's findings are poised to influence both regulations and best practices in Alberta.

“The work highlights that native species are often more sensitive than crops to sterilants,” Chen explained. “That's a critical insight for reclamation success. Regulators can now consider degradation rates, plant sensitivity, and phyto-accessibility in ways they hadn't before.”

The future, Chen believes, lies in risk-based, site-specific approaches: “Every parcel of land is different. The science now allows us to treat them that way, which could mean updated regulations, safer land, and better use of resources.”

Precision is the future of soil remediation in Alberta.



Surface soil sample collected for bromacil and bromides analysis.



Monitoring soil temperature and volumetric water content using Meter Group ECH2O 5TE soil sensors connected to Em50 dataloggers.

2025 PVMA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Amy Ebl

2025 PVMA Student Scholarship recipient, Amy Ebl, is enrolled in the second year of a Horticulture Technologist Diploma Program at Olds College. Amy spent the last two summers working as a Pesticide Applicator, operating a one-ton spray truck, following safety regulations while spraying, and handling various chemicals. Amy had to identify problem weeds and ensure proper chemical application and logging.

Amy says she learned a lot in her first summer which benefited her classroom learning regarding pest management. She was able to have in depth peer to peer conversations with her supervisor and foreman about plant identification and pest management which greatly helped her understanding. Through these conversations Amy was able to assist her coworkers in their learning related to plant identification and physiology. These conversations were very valuable and linked classroom learning to real world application.



Tori Klapstein

Tori Klapstein also received a PVMA Student Scholarship. Tori is enrolled at Lakeland College in her second year of study in an Animal Science Technology Program. Tori has a diverse work history having worked at a Tree Farm, as an Arborist Assistant, as a landscape maintenance labourer, a forklift operator, a ranch hand, and farm hand.

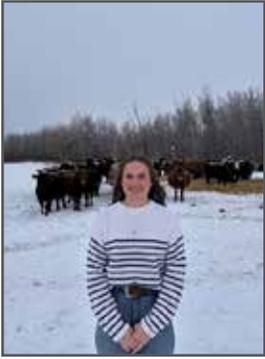
Tori's aim is to apply her knowledge of cattle management and forage systems to support vegetation management in forestry settings. She sees value in using well-managed grazing as a way to control underbrush, reduce wildfire risk, and support native plant growth in forest ecosystems. By aligning animal health with land stewardship, Tori believes we can create systems that benefit both the environment and agricultural operations.



Jaydon Bayer

Another PVMA Scholarship recipient, Jaydon Bayer is enrolled in year two of a Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences Program at Northwestern Polytechnic. Jaydon's journey into vegetation management stemmed from his entrepreneurial work ethic. A summer service for mosquito control evolved into a passion for weeds, and he gained summer work experience as a spraying applicator assistant and supervisor.

Jaydon's decision to pursue a Bachelor of Science degree in Biological Sciences stems from a profound and practical interest in plant life and chemical ecology. His growing specialty is the application of fundamental biological knowledge to Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM), and his vision for vegetation management is to execute and continually refine industrial vegetation control safely and sustainably across Alberta's infrastructure. Jaydon believes this field represents the highest standard of applied science, protecting our indispensable environment.



Nakysta Van Hecke

Meet Nakysta Van Hecke. Nakysta is in the third year of a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture program, majoring in Animal Science Program at the University of Alberta. Nakysta has spent the past 4 summers as a Seasonal Agricultural Inspector becoming a Lead Hand in her second year and in 2025 working as the sole inspector. Nakysta credits her employment as being influential in shaping her career interest. In her role she saw how quickly invasive species will out compete native species, degrade soil, reduce biodiversity, and negatively impact pasture and crop production. It reinforced that effective vegetation management is a crucial responsibility, not only for agricultural producers and landowners, but for all of society as a whole. Nakysta is very interested in integrated vegetation management approaches that incorporate mechanical, chemical, biological and cultural methods in ways that are both effective and environmentally responsible.



Abigail Dean

Abigail Dean is our final scholarship recipient for 2025. Abigail is a third year Environmental Science student at the University of Calgary, with a concentration in Biology. Abigail has been a Research Assistant and then worked this past summer as a Field Assistant.

Abigail's interest in industrial and agricultural vegetation management grew significantly while working for Lakeland College at the Lacombe Research and Development Centre. Then working as a Field Assistant for a County gave her critical hands-on experience identifying both native vegetation and regulated weed species. This work deepened Abigail's understanding of how vegetation management intersects with public safety, invasive species control, and long-term land sustainability. Abigail is eager to continue learning, collaborating with industry professionals, and supporting the sustainable future of Alberta's agriculture, forests, and industrial landscapes.

EACH OF THE PVMA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS WERE AWARDED \$2,000 TOWARDS THEIR TUITION AND INVITED TO BE OUR GUESTS AT THE PVMA 2026 SPRING CONFERENCE, WHERE THEY WILL BE RECOGNIZED PUBLICLY. THE PVMA IS PROUD TO SUPPORT STUDENTS THROUGH SCHOLARSHIPS.



KEITH SANFTLEBEN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

RECIPIENT – RILEY ROMASHENKO

The 2025 recipient of the Keith Sanftleben Memorial Scholarship is Riley Romashenko. Riley is currently in year 4 of a Bachelor of Science in Renewable Resource Science Program at the University of Saskatchewan. He has also spent the last 3 summers working as a Season Sprayer Operator with Rocky View County.

The memorial scholarship was set up to honour Keith's memory and to highlight students that have an interest in making a positive impact on the community and others.

Riley has been making a meaningful community difference by coaching youth hockey, participating in the

Cenovus Energy Leadership Program, and by completing Emergency medical Responder training. Riley is also involved in a project tied to improving community wellbeing and sustainability. You can read Riley's full essay included in this issue of the Vegetation Manager magazine.

Riley received a \$4,000 award from the PVMA, including a \$1000 contribution from AdvantageVM, towards his tuition and an invitation to the 2026 Spring Conference to be recognized publicly. Due to the timing and distance from his school ***Riley is unable to join us at the Spring Conference.***



Making a Meaningful Community Difference

RILEY ROMASHENKO

KEITH SANFTLEBEN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY

Community engagement and making a positive impact are more important than ever in shaping an inclusive and vibrant society. Growing up, I have always valued the power of empathy, respect, and service-motivations that have guided my efforts to improve the well-being of others and foster positive change. Whether through coaching youth, participating in leadership programs, or collaborating on sustainability projects, I am committed to helping build healthier communities and a better future. Through purposeful actions, strong leadership, and a dedication to serving others, I strive to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those around me and in the greater community.

Coaching youth hockey and engaging in community leadership initiatives have deeply shaped my understanding of the well-being of others and the importance of empathy. As a hockey coach, I worked closely with young teenagers, teaching not only the hockey fundamentals but also core values such as respect, teamwork, effective communication, and giving back to the community. This experience taught me the importance of patience and adaptability, as every player learns differently and requires unique approaches to feel valued and understood. My participation in the Cenovus Energy Leadership Program further strengthened my leadership abilities, showing me how impactful respectful communication and understanding can be when working toward community betterment. Completing my Emergency

Medical Responder training expanded these lessons into a new context, which taught me to remain calm, supportive, and empathetic toward individuals and families in moments of distress. Together, these experiences have helped shape my leadership approach, blending empathy, patience, and respect, and guided my passion for contributing to both people and the environment. I now strive to apply these same values to improving ecosystems and teaching others how to create positive, sustainable change in the natural world around them.

Currently, I am involved in a self-directed fourth-year project through the University of Saskatchewan that is tied to improving community wellbeing and sustainability. Alongside two classmates, we are collaborating with Little Pine First Nation (LPFN) to develop and implement a comprehensive food sovereignty plan that promotes long-term food security and cultural revitalization. Our team is listening to the community's vision and applying our academic expertise to their desired outcomes, like conducting soil analyses, proposing suitable crop species for an orchard and crops, and assisting in funding applications for key infrastructure such as a greenhouse and food freezer to support both agriculture and traditional hunting practices. This partnership emphasizes respect, two-eyed seeing, and empowerment, aligning with the broader Indigenous food sovereignty goals of self-determination and sufficiency. Beyond the university

project, my work with Rocky View County over the past three summers has also contributed directly to community and environmental betterment. I have collaborated with residents to control noxious and prohibited weeds, educating them about the importance of native species and offering practical, sustainable management solutions. These experiences have reinforced my belief that meaningful environmental stewardship begins with clear communication, cooperation, and. Whether through improving food resilience in First Nations communities or helping Alberta residents protect their natural ecosystems, I have learned that ethical leadership means applying scientific knowledge in ways that empower others and sustain both people and the land.

Looking ahead, my primary goal is to work in environmental consulting to help communities achieve greater ecological health and improve overall well-being. By partnering directly with community leaders and members, I believe we can leverage collective insight to design solutions that enhance not only environmental conditions but also the happiness and resilience of local populations. I believe that collaborative approaches create a strong sense of ownership and pride, ultimately strengthening social bonds and uplifting human welfare. I am committed to using my academic and field experiences in Renewable Resource and Environmental Sciences as a leader and advocate for positive change. My plans include launching a consulting business focused on partnering with communities to remediate sites, restore habitats, and address local concerns through innovative technology. For example, using drones will allow better access to monitor remote or sensitive areas without causing further disturbance, while exploring bioremediation for a sustainable strategy for managing spills. By prioritizing community engagement and drawing on cutting-edge science, I hope to set an example

for future professionals and demonstrate what ethical stewardship can accomplish.

Since declaring my major in Resource Science, I have been motivated to inspire others to make a positive difference-whether through active participation in community projects or advocating for ways to reverse environmental degradation. I strive to lead by example, sharing knowledge and empowering community members to find solutions together, so that our collective impact can be broad, lasting, and genuinely transformative for both people and the environment.

From coaching youth hockey and embracing community leadership to coordinating university-led projects and planning for future advocacy in environmental consulting, my journey has been defined by a pursuit to positively impact both human welfare and the environment. These experiences have instilled in me a strong belief in the power of empathy,

“ Thank you for selecting me as the 2025 recipient of the Keith Sanfletban Memorial Scholarship. Although I would appreciate receiving this honour in person on February 24th, it would require me to miss 1-2 of classes surrounding midterm exams and mandatory labs, so unfortunately, I will not be able to attend. I am still very grateful for the recognition.”

-RILEY ROMASHENKO

PVMA SCHOLARSHIPS

The PVMA will be awarding up to five \$2,000 scholarships each year to Alberta students who are enrolled in an Alberta Post Secondary Institute in a vegetation management-related program OR in any program but have vegetation management work experience. In addition to the scholarship, the winners will be invited expenses paid to our Spring Seminar.

Keith Sanftleben Memorial Scholarship:

Keith Sanftleben was an active member of the PVMA for many years and had a passion for helping other people and communities. This scholarship has been set up to honour his memory and to highlight students that have an interest in making a positive impact on the community and others. The PVMA will be awarding one \$4,000 scholarship each year to a student enrolled in post secondary study at an Alberta government approved provincial, national, or international institution or program. \$1,000 is funded by AdvantageVM with the balance funded by the PVMA.

**Applications are accepted from
September 1st to November 30th of each year.**



COMMITTEE REPORTS

- AWARDS/ELECTION COMMITTEE

Since our last meeting, the PVMA received 5 Keith Sanftleben Memorial and 15 PVMA Scholarship applications that the committee reviewed to select the successful candidates that would receive support through the association. PVMA Scholarships (Closed November 30th 2025)

Five successful candidates were chosen by the awards committee by way of a scoring rubric based on their personal and professional merit. See the article in this issue of the Vegetation Manager magazine for a snapshot of the chosen recipients.

Keith Sanftleben (Closed Nov 30th 2025)

- Riley Romashenko was chosen by the awards committee by way of a scoring rubric based on personal, professional, and community focus merit. You will have a chance to read Riley's Essay in this issue of the Vegetation Manager Magazine.

Bursary (Closed January 31st 2026)

As of the time of writing of this report, the application deadline had not passed. Applications will be reviewed by the Awards Committee in February and recipients will be notified.

-Thane Beagle, Director in Charge

- CASINO COMMITTEE

The PVMA Volunteers attended the Starlight Casino in Edmonton January 21 & 22nd and as the Casino Chair, I extend my utmost gratitude to those who Volunteered their time to support the great community that form the association. Working with Jeff (Casino Advisors) made planning volunteer schedules easy and was also helpful in organizing members of the Casino Angels organization to fill in 1/3rd of the shifts. The AGLC has received the PVMA's request to host their next Casino in Q1 of 2028; if there are any suggestions to improve the experience for future Casino events or have a recommendation on a new host casino, please reach out to myself or other members of the casino committee members.

- Thane Beagle, Director in Charge

- MARKETING/PUBLIC RELATIONS

We have been actively engaged this fall and winter, participating in the ISA Fall Conference and Tradeshow in Regina on October 20-21, as well as the AAAF In-Service Training and Tradeshow in Edmonton from December 1-4. As career fairs resume, we will represent PVMA at the Green Growth Career Fair in Olds on January 26. For those interested in recruiting students for 2026, please contact execdirector@pvma.ca to be included on the contact list distributed to students. Please follow PVMA on LinkedIn for updates regarding future events. We are also pleased to announce that an editorial on PVMA will appear in an upcoming issue of the Canadian Reclamation Magazine.

- Joanne Ireland, Committee Chairperson

- GOVERNMENT LIAISON COMMITTEE

The Government of Alberta has updated its Environmental Code of Practice for Pesticides related to the management of aquatic invasive species.

Previously, the Code permitted treatment only of purple loosestrife growing on dry land, and only with the active ingredients glyphosate or triclopyr. Under the updated Code, treatment is now allowed for any invasive aquatic weed growing on dry land that is listed under either the Weed Control Act or the Fisheries (Alberta) Act. Treatment may be carried out using any pesticide, provided that both the target species and the use location are explicitly included on the federal Pest Control Products Act (PCPA) label.

Health Canada Introduces Federal Tank Mix Initiative

Health Canada has formally introduced the new Federal Tank Mix Initiative, effective December 20, 2025. This initiative provides greater clarity regarding permitted, prohibited, and restricted tank mixes that applicators are required to follow.

Additional details can be found within this magazine or through Health Canada's guidance documentation available on the Government of Canada website.

- Jamie Wiltzen, Director in Charge

- EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

We're proud to unveil the latest edition of Vegetation Manager, released in conjunction with our 2026 Spring Conference. This issue features insightful follow-ups from past conference speakers and highlights the continued support of our dedicated advertisers. As always, our goal is to deliver relevant, high-quality content that reflects the evolving interests and innovations within our industry.

We're also excited to introduce a new Membership / Company Highlight Program within the magazine. If you or your company would like to be featured in an upcoming issue of Vegetation Manager, we invite you to submit a written industry profile that tells your story—who you are, what you do, and what sets you apart.

If you're interested in contributing, please reach out to Val or Jamie. We hope you enjoy this Spring edition and find it both thought-provoking and valuable.

- Jamie Wiltzen, Director in Charge

- SAFETY COMMITTEE

The safety committee is looking for input on topics of interest for future articles in the PVMA magazine. If you are interested in participating with the safety committee, please contact Val Eichel, PVMA office manager val@pvma.ca

- Don Walters, Director in Charge

- MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

The Membership Committee remains committed to enhancing the overall value and experience of PVMA membership. Our focus continues to be on identifying opportunities to provide meaningful benefits, resources, and engagement for both long-standing members and first-time conference guests. We are actively exploring new ways to strengthen member outreach, recognition, and involvement at PVMA events.

New additions have been made to the PVMA merchandise table—please take a moment to stop by and check out the latest items, including hats, hoodies, coffee mugs, travel mugs, and toques.

If you have any suggestions or ideas, we would love to hear from you. Please don't hesitate to reach out.

- Jamie Wiltzen, Director in Charge

- SEMINAR COMMITTEE

We are pleased to provide updates regarding our upcoming conferences. The Red Deer Resort and Casino has been confirmed as the venue for our fall conference, scheduled for October 26-27, 2026. Additionally, an optional field training session on electrical awareness will be offered at the Fortis Training Center on the afternoon preceding the conference.

The cost of this session is included in the registration fee and will provide customized educational content for all members. Our three-day biennial conference will again take place at River Cree from February 23-25, 2027. As we begin preparing the sessions, we invite you to contact the PVMA with recommendations or ideas for potential presenters and topics.

- Joanne Ireland, Committee Chair

- NATIONAL/INDUSTRIAL COMMITTEE

IVMA-BC held its Biennial Forum on November 4-6, 2026 in Prince George, with about 60-80 members attending in-person and online. The event featured 22 presentations over the three days and the conference proceedings are available for viewing on its website at <https://www.ivma.com/conf-proceedings>

IVMA-Man/Sask and the PVMA Board of Directors met on December 9, 2025 to discuss the benefits and considerations of potentially dissolving the IVMA-Man/Sask organization and bringing them under the umbrella of the PVMA organization. While talks are currently underway, no final decision has been made at this time.

Ontario Vegetation Managers Association (OVMA) will be hosting a Conference & Field Day on September 29 - October 1st, 2026 in Walkerton, Ontario. More information about the event can be found at <https://www.ovma.ca/events/2026-ovma-conference-field-day/>

Atlantic Vegetation Management Association (AVMA) shares news and information about the AVMA organization through an online blog on its website <https://myavma.ca/blog/>

*Written by Lisa Rybchuk, on behalf of
- Chris Johnson, Director in Charge*

- UTT-UTW BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The trade recognition talks with the government are proceeding along well; with the expected hurdles we knew we would encounter when we began this undertaking. We were approached from the residential arborist side in regard to joining our current program and being a part of the trade recognition path.

The board of Governors is reviewing all information we were provided, and our mandate remains the same; To ensure we are protecting our industry and looking out for employees working within this industry. As we continue to move forward on this mission we will look to involve industry more in the discussions, as well as our stakeholders, to ensure that we are all on the same page.

I spoke in a meeting recently about the legacy of the PVMA program and the hard work and efforts of the founders and those that came behind them.

They created a program that has surpassed 40 years and continues to grow. This program is a testament to the strength of our industry. Industry support through their time, equipment, and expert instruction, along with the support of stakeholders and the dedication of the PVMA Board and UTT/UTW Board of Governors, have all played an important role in the success of this program.

Along with this, I cannot fail to mention the students attending the program. Having been an instructor for the last 20 plus years, I have seen a steady improvement in the students coming to this program. They are more trained and better prepared for the course. This is a success across our industry, and we should all take pride in the direction we are going.

Special Notes: We have been approached by a few groups that want to work with us to deliver the program in other provinces to their employees. This is a testament to all those involved with those programs.

- Bob Gordon, Director in Charge

CONGRATULATIONS!



**To Val Eichelt on
her 10-year Work
Anniversary with
the PVMA! We
truly couldn't do it
without you!**



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