

Alberta Wetland Policy Implementation Fact Sheet Forestry

Wetland Policy Background and Development

In the fall of 2013, the Government of Alberta announced a new Wetland Policy for the province. The goal of the Alberta Wetland Policy (the Policy) is to conserve, restore, protect, and manage Alberta's wetlands to sustain the benefits they provide to the environment, society and the economy.

The Policy represents a significant shift in wetland management and considers not only the physical area of a wetland but also the relative value it provides. Relative wetland value is based on the ability to store and supply water, improve water quality, provide habitat for wetland species, human uses, and the regional abundance of wetlands on the landscape.

If permanent loss of a wetland, or portion thereof, occurs in spite of implementing all practical measures to avoid and minimize impacts, then wetland replacement will be required for the portion that is lost. Replacement requirements are established on the basis of wetland area lost and the relative value of that area.

This document provides information on implementation of the Policy for the forestry industry. Please visit the Alberta Wetland Policy Implementation home page for additional information at:

- [Alberta Wetland Policy Implementation](#)

Planning and Legislative Alignment

Strategic level Forest Management Plans, operational level plans, and annual operating plans are aligned with the Alberta Wetland Policy, Directives and Guides. There are no changes required to the forest management planning and operational processes to achieve the outcomes of the Policy.

Current forest policy governing forest harvesting, reforestation and temporary access activities is an acceptable standard for the avoidance, minimization and replacement hierarchy of the Alberta Wetland Policy.

Existing legislative and policy frameworks that govern forest management activities, including planning, operations, reforestation, management of forest insect and disease agents, and reclamation, place a strong emphasis on the conservation, restoration, protection and management of Alberta's wetlands.

Forest management utilizes leading edge tools in the identification of Alberta's Wetlands (e.g. the Alberta Vegetation Inventory, LiDAR, and Derived Ecosite Phase). These tools, in conjunction with the Alberta Forest Management Planning Standard and Operating Ground Rules, provide the standards that Forestry Operators shall follow to ensure the protection of Alberta's wetlands.

Wetland Mitigation Hierarchy

The goal of the Policy and the Alberta Wetland Mitigation Directive is to avoid wetlands, whenever possible. Where wetlands cannot be avoided, minimization of impacts is undertaken. For example, reforestation of harvested areas is a legislated responsibility, and forestry access includes a reclamation requirement to reclaim back to pre-disturbance conditions.

When planning and developing temporary roads, forestry operators are already required to balance avoiding wetlands and achieving the smallest footprint. The Wetland Mitigation Hierarchy requires documentation of this balance, when avoidance is not practicable, and is part of the existing forestry approval process.

Replacement

Where forestry activities result in a permanent loss of wetland from the landscape, wetland replacement will be required. The Alberta Wetland Mitigation Directive details the requirements for a Replacement Proposal.

The key addition to processes that existed prior to June 1, 2016 is the requirement to complete an Alberta Wetland Rapid Evaluation Tool – Actual (ABWRET-A).

This tool is required to determine the relative wetland value of the wetland(s) lost and the resulting replacement requirement.

The *Public Lands Act* authorization process has been amended to include replacement requirements of the Policy.

Forestry Wildfire Management Activities

Activities governed by the *Forest Prairie and Protection Act* are also aligned to meet wetland policy requirements. This includes FireSmart and wildfire fighting activities.