

About the Alberta Wetland Policy



Introducing the Alberta Wetland Policy

The Alberta Wetland Policy provides strategic direction and tools to make informed management decisions in the long-term interest of Albertans. The policy minimizes loss and degradation of wetlands, while allowing for continued growth and economic development in the province.

The goal of the Alberta Wetland Policy is to conserve, restore, protect and manage Alberta’s wetlands to sustain the benefits they provide to the environment, society and economy. To achieve this goal, the policy focuses on four outcomes:

1. Wetlands of the highest value are protected for the long-term benefit of Albertans.
2. Wetlands and their benefits are conserved and restored in areas where losses have been high.
3. Wetlands are managed by avoiding, minimizing and if necessary, replacing lost wetland value.
4. Wetland management considers regional context.

Not all wetlands are the same. Under the Policy, wetland value is assessed according to specific criteria and assigned an overall wetland value to inform management decisions.

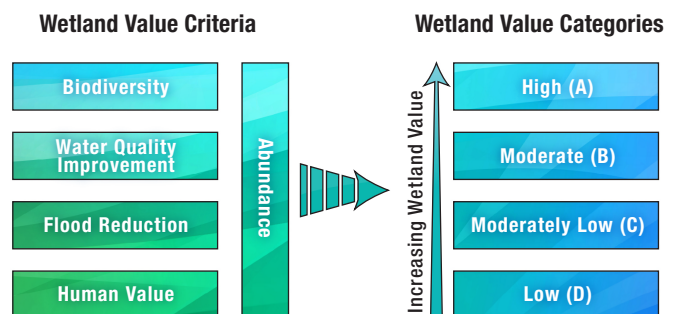
The Wetland Management System

Several key concepts and mechanisms are crucial to a successful implementation of a provincial Wetland Management System under the Alberta Wetland Policy:

1. Relative Wetland Value
2. Wetland Mitigation
 - a. Avoidance
 - b. Minimization
 - c. Replacement
3. Knowledge and Information Systems
4. Performance Measures, Monitoring and Reporting
5. Wetland Stewardship

Relative Wetland Value

Under the Alberta Wetland Policy, determination of relative wetland value is a key aspect of the management system. The relative wetland value approach evaluates individual wetlands based on five key criteria to determine if they rate Low (D), Moderately Low (C), Moderate (B) or High (A).



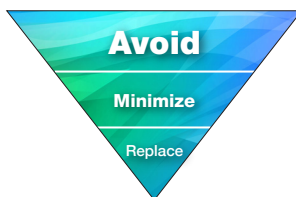
Wetland assessments for regulatory purposes are undertaken by Qualified Wetland Science Practitioners (QWSPs) using newly developed tools. The QWSP is required to identify a wetland and determine its class using the Alberta Wetland Classification System (AWCS), delineate the boundary of a wetland using the Alberta Wetland Identification and Delineation Directive, and assess their relative value using the Alberta Wetland Rapid Evaluation Tool (ABWRET).

All of the information collected in a wetland assessment will form the basis of any application submitted to regulatory agencies for consideration of an activity in or near a wetland.

Wetland Mitigation

Under the Policy, mitigation refers to management activities undertaken to avoid and minimize negative impacts on wetlands, and to replace lost wetland value where necessary. The Wetland Mitigation Hierarchy shown below portrays the three staged approach towards achievement of wetland management objectives and/or goals.

The primary and preferred response is to avoid impacts to wetlands. Where avoidance is not possible, proponents are expected to minimize impacts on wetlands. As a last resort, and where avoidance and minimization efforts are not feasible or prove ineffective, wetland replacement is required.



Prioritization for wetland replacement will encourage replacement in or near the area where a wetland was lost. Note: ephemeral water bodies are exempt from this process.

Wetland replacement can be “**restorative**” or “**non-restorative**”. Restorative means replacement activities attempt to make up for lost wetland area through restoration, enhancement or construction of another wetland. Non-restorative refers to a variety of alternatives supporting the maintenance of wetland value by advancing the state of wetland science and wetland management in Alberta.

Replacement is divided into two categories: “**in-lieu payment**” and “**wetland offset**”. In-lieu fee payment is where the approval holder chooses to pay financial restitution for a wetland loss. These



funds will be allocated towards specific restorative or non-restorative measures. Wetland offset consists of permittee-responsible or third party replacement. Under permittee-responsible the approval holder undertakes the restorative replacement, while for third party an approval holder purchases offset credits from a third party provider. Replacement requirements enable and encourage innovation.

Knowledge and Information Systems

A broad range of integrated data products or tools will be required to support and enable the Alberta Wetland Policy. Examples include the tools mentioned previously as well as certification systems for Qualified Wetland Science Practitioners (QWSPs) and Wetland Replacement Agents.

Performance Measures, Monitoring and Reporting

The Alberta Water Policy, its administration, and its effectiveness will be evaluated and reported on periodically to ensure that the stated goal and outcomes are being met.

Wetland Stewardship

The Policy recognizes that wetland stewardship is an important component of effective wetland management in Alberta. A range of initiatives exists and are under development to encourage wetland stewardship activities to help sustain the benefits of wetlands.

To learn more visit: AEP.Alberta.ca and search for ‘Wetlands’ or visit www.wetlandsalberta.ca