



Title:	Allocation and Sustainable Management of Peat Resources on Public Land
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1.0 Authority

This policy provides operational and administrative guidance derived under the authority of the following:

- Section 20 of the *Public Lands Act* and sections 9, 10, 17, 22, 23 and 110-120 of the *Public Lands Administration Regulation*.
- Section 36(1)-39 of the *Water Act* and section 5 of the *Water (Ministerial) Regulation*.
- Section 137(1) of the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* and sections 1-3, 6-8, 12-14 of the *Conservation and Reclamation Regulation*.

2.0 Introduction and Purpose

2.1 Introduction

This Directive provides for the overall policy direction related to the allocation and management of provincial peat resources from public land for commercial horticulture peat operations and associated activities. The Directive does not apply to the removal of peat that is incidental to the management of an agricultural or horticultural crop, the removal of peat or peat soils for construction activities, or the removal of overburden for other mining activities.

2.2 Background

Approximately 85 percent of Alberta’s wetlands are located in the non-settled area of Alberta covering over 100,000 square kilometers of land. Peatlands, which include both bogs and fens comprise almost 58 percent of this area¹.

Peatlands are characterized by the accumulation of peat of 40 cm in depth or greater, and may or may not have open water present. The groundwater table in bogs and fens is located at or near the ground surface. A bog receives most of its water from rainfall and is very acidic, often with a pH less than 4. Vegetation in a bog consists primarily of Sphagnum mosses and other shrub and tree species able to tolerate acidic water and low nutrient levels. Fens receive most of their water supply by flowing groundwater, therefore the water contains more

¹ D.H.Vitt, L.A.Halsey, M. Thormann, and T. Martin. 1996. Peatland inventory of Alberta. Prepared for the Alberta Peat Task Force, National Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Forest Management, University of Alberta, Edmonton. Alberta Environment and Parks. Alberta Merged Wetland Inventory.

nutrients and is less acidic than in bogs, with a pH ranging from 4 to 8. Vegetation consists of sedges, grasses, shrubs and trees.

Peatlands also provide significant ecological values, goods and services to Albertans. These include water storage, water quantity, wildlife habitat, significant carbon sequestration and storage, etc.

Peat is an organic substance comprised of decomposed organic matter (mainly sphagnum moss) that has accumulated in varying depths over a long period of time. Vertical accumulation rates for Alberta bogs have been reported to range from about 12 to 26 cm over 100 years².

Peat has been harvested from peatlands (fen and bog wetlands) in Alberta for horticulture purposes since the mid-1960's. Peat is used primarily as a growing media by commercial growers, and is almost exclusively exported to the United States of America for this purpose. Large areas of peatlands are required for a peat operation. A typical peat operation involves the preparation of the land by clearing all surface vegetation and debris, installing large perimeter and internal wetland drainage ditches to reduce water levels within the project area, and then re-profiling the bog surface to facilitate peat removal. The surface of the peat bog is then allowed to air dry so peat be removed using large vacuum harvesters. The loose bulk peat is stockpiled until removed from the site and transported to a processing facility where amendments may be added as custom mixes, compressed and bagged for shipping. Harvesting operations occur over 20-30 years per bog depending on the depth of the deposit. Once peat harvesting is completed, the project area is required to be reclaimed back to an early successional peatland.

For regulatory purposes, peat is defined as a surface material under the *Public Lands Administrative Regulation* (PLAR) and removal of peat from public land requires a formal disposition under the *Public Lands Act* and *PLAR*. The *PLAR* requires reclamation of public land to an equivalent capability upon expiry, cancellation, surrender or abandonment of a formal disposition. The definition of "specified land" under the *Conservation and Reclamation Regulation* includes the construction, operation and reclamation of a peat operation, therefore there are reclamation requirements under the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* and regulations as well. The drainage of any wetland is also considered an activity under the *Water Act* and subject to an approval.

There is increasing pressure by the peat industry to access and harvest new and larger areas of peatland on public land, primarily in the non-settled area of Alberta. Peat operations compete for access to land in an environment that already has many industrial users. The target landscapes also have increasing constraints involving multiple resource management objectives including managing for cumulative effects, species at risk, and other biodiversity values.

To date, access to new peatland areas has been limited until the province adopted its new Wetland Policy and until a modern policy framework for peat operations on public land was developed that addressed the current land use pressures.

The revised policy approach to managing sustainable peat operations on public land is consistent with Alberta's new approach to land use planning and managing public land, and is based on an Integrated Resource Management Systems approach.

2.3 Policy Goals

Given the intricacies and challenges of managing Alberta's Crown lands and the department's multiple resource management objectives, the overarching goal of this Directive is to provide a modern framework for the allocation and management of peat resources for commercial horticultural purposes on public land. To achieve this, the Directive is intended to achieve the following specific goals:

² Turetsky, M.R., R.K. Wieder, C.J. Williams and D.H. Vitt. 2000. Organic matter accumulation, peat chemistry, and permafrost melting in peatlands of boreal Alberta. *EcoScience* 7(3): 379-392.

1. Maintain biodiversity and the long-term productive capacity of landscapes to ensure they are self-sustaining and available for future generations' use;
2. Effectively manage and reduce further impacts to sensitive lands, fish and wildlife, and species at risk;
3. Allocate and manage peat resources in a manner that reflects the current philosophy of managing public land through an Integrated Resource Management Systems approach including managing for cumulative impacts on biodiversity, land and water resources;
4. Meet the management objectives of the provincial Wetland Policy;
5. Control possible adverse environmental effects of peat harvesting;
6. Limit speculative holding of public land without intention of use;
7. Provide an equally accessible, fair and transparent allocation process for the orderly development of peat operations on suitable public land;
8. Provide clarity around the exploration and development rights conferred by dispositions issued under the *Public Lands Act*.
9. Ensure there are defined and documented administrative procedures to provide consistent and predictable land use decision making;
10. Reduce the public's exposure to reclamation liabilities and promote progressive and timely reclamation;
11. Promote innovation and encourage environmentally sustainable peat harvesting practices.

2.4 Policy Alignment

The Alberta government's principles of responsible resource management require the balancing of environmental, social and economic benefits of Alberta's resources for the good of all Albertans. This Policy Directive has a role in supporting appropriate opportunities for economic diversification, particularly in rural areas, through the responsible development and sustainable management of peatland resources. Implementation of this policy also considers and is consistent with the following:

1. Alberta's approach to natural resource management through an Integrated Resource Management Systems approach that includes managing for cumulative impacts;
2. Informs or is consistent with regional and sub-regional land use planning, media specific frameworks, and in consideration of cumulative effects and existing biodiversity (fish and wildlife) policy objectives.
3. Alberta's commitment to the goals of the federal Recovery Strategy for the Woodland Caribou, the Woodland Caribou Policy for Alberta, and the Alberta Woodland Caribou Recovery Plan;
4. Defined Key Wildlife and Biodiversity Areas with approved land use restrictions.
5. Alberta Wetland Policy

2.5 Principles

Peatlands in Alberta are a key and valued component to the province's land and water management systems. Peatlands are significant reservoirs of carbon which when disturbed or destroyed, release carbon into the atmosphere resulting in increased greenhouse gas emissions; provide a surface water and groundwater regulation function within a watershed, including a source of flow to fish bearing waters; and are important habitats to many wildlife species.

The allocation of public land for the purpose of commercial peat harvesting shall be consistent with and guided by the following principles:

1. Alberta is committed to the conservation of wetlands through the implementation of the Provincial Wetland Policy, including the protection of peatlands with high ecological value.

2. Peatlands that can be allocated for peat harvesting and can be sustainably managed provide opportunities for responsible economic diversification and development, particularly in rural areas.
3. Where there are competing uses for the use of peat resources for commercial purpose, the choice of land use should be governed by the greatest return to Albertans.
4. Where peat operations are an acceptable land use, the allocation of peat resources will occur in a fair, transparent and orderly manner that promotes the sustainable management of land and water resources.
5. Peat operations will be sited and allocated utilizing an integrated resource management systems approach that takes into account cumulative impacts on biodiversity, land and water resources, and manage those resources in a manner to ensure their long-term sustainability.
6. The allocation of peat resources will be managed in such a way that maintains the resilience of sensitive ecosystems including sustainable populations of fish and wildlife, and species at risk.
7. Areas for peat operations are sited to avoid conflicts with adjacent non-compatible land uses.
8. The allocation, drainage and development of peat resources do not adversely affect the local supply of water, health, safety, and general welfare of Albertans.
9. Albertan's exposure to long-term reclamation liabilities will be minimized, and are assured that sufficient security is in place to offset reclamation liabilities.
10. Disturbed peatlands from peat operations will be reclaimed to an early trajectory peatland community ensuring the ecological goods and services of the peatland are available for future generations of Albertans.

3.0 Definitions

For the purposes of this Directive, the following definitions apply:

“*Accredited laboratory*” means an analytical facility accredited by the Canadian Association for Laboratory Accreditation Inc. (CALA).

“*Buffer*” or “*buffer zone*” means a strip of undisturbed land comprised of in-situ vegetation located between the project area and the lease boundary, or a defined distance from a sensitive feature that must be maintained for the management of a particular resource management objective.

“*Donor site*” means the source land location from which live vegetative propagule materials are removed for use as reclamation material.

“*Entry*” means the peat operator has initiated work to facilitate access to the area that is subject to a peat operation or associated infrastructure development, or generally to prepare the site for actively harvesting peat. This may include but is not limited to the clearing of vegetation, drainage of a peatland, extraction, processing or hauling of materials or reclamation activities.

“*Exploration*” means the process of assessing the quantity and quality of peat within a geographic area and includes the collection of pre-disturbance environmental data that is required to support an application for a Surface Materials Lease.

“*Feeder operation*” means a commercial peat operation producing peat that typically sells bulk peat to a major operator who processes, bales and markets the final product.

“*Field*” or “*production field*” means a defined area within the project area from which peat is actively drained, and is or will be removed as part of an authorized peat operation, or where peat has been removed and is being progressively reclaimed. This does not include areas that have been successfully reclaimed and a reclamation certificate has been issued.

“*HUC 8 watershed unit*” means the landscape unit by which the allocation and management of peat operations will be applied, and more specifically is a watershed at the sub-basin level, analogous to medium-sized river basins. Total watershed area at the HUC 8 level is typically greater than 500km² (50,000 ha).

“*Peat*” means a type of surface material that is a naturally occurring organic material formed in a water-saturated environment, comprised of decomposed organic matter found primarily in peatlands (bog and fen wetlands) that have accumulated in varying depths over a long period of time.

“*Peat company*” or “*peat operator*” means an individual, company, corporation, and all their subsidiaries and affiliates that conduct peat operations on public land.

“*Peatland*” means a wetland with more than 40 cm of accumulated peat and includes bogs and fens.

“*Peat harvesting*” means the physical removal of peat from a wetland for commercial horticulture purposes, but does not include removal of peat that is incidental to the management of an agricultural or horticultural crop, the removal of peat or peat soils for construction activities, or the removal of overburden for other mining activities.

“*Peat operations*” means a regulated activity involving the removal of peat for commercial horticulture purposes, including the clearing and surface preparation of the land, draining, stockpiling, processing, storing, transporting, and the reclaiming and restoration of any land in connection with the commercial development of peat.

“*Peat Stockpile*” means a temporary accumulation of peat removed from within the project area, or processed peat stored at a peat processing facility.

“*Progressive Reclamation*” means any interim or concurrent reclamation of land undertaken during, following or in connection with construction / development and ongoing operations associated with an active disposition.

“*Project area*” or “*area subjected to peat operations*” means the cumulative area within the outer boundary of an approved Surface Materials Lease that is or will be subject to surface disturbance, surface and subsurface drainage, the specific field(s) that will be scheduled to be harvested and progressively reclaimed, including identified peat donor sites within the lease boundary. It does not include any buffer zones between the project area and the lease boundary.

“*Reclaimed*” means the status of land that has been re-vegetated to the approved plant community for a minimum three (3) growing seasons after landform construction, contouring, reclamation material placement, and preparation of the seedbed has occurred.

“*Reclamation*” has the same meaning as in section 1(ddd) of the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* and generally means the process of returning the disturbed lands to a reclaimed state.

“*Registered Professional*” means a regulated professional registered or licensed in Alberta who is qualified by education and experience and acting within their scope of practice in one or more of the following fields of expertise: wetland ecology, vegetation identification and analysis, fish and wildlife identification and habitat assessment, hydrology, hydrogeology, hydraulics, drainage, flood control, erosion and sediment control, water pollution control, and the technical analyses, design, and application of required engineered systems, processes, and structures.

4.0 Policy Direction

4.1 Scope

This Directive is applicable to all Crown lands administered by the Minister of Alberta Environment and Parks under the *Public Lands Act*. The policy applies to the harvesting of peat for commercial horticultural purposes. It does not apply to peat harvesting on private land.

4.2 Lands Available for Allocation

Peat operations will be managed on the landscape within a sub-watershed context using Alberta’s HUC 8 watershed units. Availability of peat resources for peat operations will be consistent with regional and sub-regional land use planning guidance, media specific frameworks, and in consideration of cumulative effects and existing biodiversity (fish and wildlife) policy objectives.

For the purpose of this policy, peat availability is generally based on the sensitivity class of the land and the constraints to development for peat operations. Two land sensitivity classes have been established as follows:

Sensitivity Class of Public Land	Constraints to Peat Operations	Peat Availability
Low Sensitivity	No constraints	Generally Available
High Sensitivity	Sensitive or Critical Habitats where cumulative land uses pose significant challenges to the viability of sustaining fish or wildlife populations	Excluded - Not Available

1. *Low Sensitivity Public Lands*: These public lands generally have no or limited constraints to the development of peat operations.
2. *High Sensitivity Public Lands*: Peat operations are incompatible with the management goals of these public lands and include:
 - a. All parks and protected areas (Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands, Wildlands, and Provincial Parks);
 - b. Lands that are subject to defined management frameworks or plans (e.g. Caribou Range Zones) that are being specifically managed to support recovery of species at risk; and
 - c. Key wildlife and biodiversity zones including land areas within 800 meters of specific Trumpeter Swan Lakes where land use restrictions have been established for all industrial activities; and
 - d. Lands within HUC 8 watersheds that contain fish species at risk (e.g., bull trout, Athabasca rainbow trout, and grayling) and where cumulative land uses pose significant challenges to the viability of sustaining fish populations.

Areas of general peat availability have been mapped based on current constraints (see appendix 1) and will be available to industry as GIS shape files to support planning, exploration and application purposes. The data will be updated periodically to reflect any significant changes in boundaries.

4.3 Information Requirements to Support Peat Surface Material Lease (SML) Applications

Each SML application for a peat operation must be supported with adequate information for review and decision making purposes. The following three (3) documents must be supplied with the application to meet the adequacy requirements under the Public Lands Administrative Regulation (PLAR):

1. Biophysical Report
2. Peat Development and Operations Plan; and
3. Conservation and Reclamation Plan

The specific information requirements for each of the documents are defined in the associated “Guide to Surface Materials Lease Information Requirements for Peat Operations” and “Requirements for Conservation and Reclamation Plans for Peat Operations in Alberta”.

4.4 Peat Application Processes, Allocation Criteria, and Term of Disposition

1. Application Process

The normal sequence for an applicant to obtain a lease is as follows:

a. Temporary Field Authority (TFA)

The TFA authorization is optional and may be obtained prior to applying for a Surface Material Exploration (SME) for the purpose of undertaking a reconnaissance evaluation of the suitability of a peatland, i.e., to determine if the peatland has sufficient depth and quality to warrant investing in the resources required to undertake formal investigations under a Surface Materials Exploration permit. This authorization gives the holder the right to access public land but does not convey any exclusivity rights.

b. Surface Materials Exploration (SME) permit

The SME is the disposition issued to an applicant that authorizes the holder to access public land to conduct peat exploration activities. The department will administratively consider the land area to be disposed for the duration of the authorization term as it is presumed that the holder will apply for a formal disposition to extract the resource prior to the authorization expiring.

Although there is no bar to the department accepting applications for another land use and issuing overlapping dispositions, where more than one proposed disposition is incompatible, a land use decision will be made considering the best management and use of the public land for the benefit of Albertans.

The information expected to be collected during the term of the SME permit is outlined in the document “Guide to Surface Materials Lease Information Requirements for Peat Operations”. All reports arising from the site investigations must be prepared by a registered professional, and all laboratory analyses other than peat quality, must be conducted by an accredited laboratory.

c. Surface Materials Lease (SML)

To apply for a Surface Materials Lease (SML) to conduct a peat operation, the proponent must support the application with sufficient information for the department to adequately review the

proposed peat operation. This information is normally collected during the term of a Surface Materials Exploration (SME) permit.

Submission of the SML application will be through the Electronic Disposition System (EDS). The administrative process is outlined in the document “Guidelines for the Administration and Maintenance of Applications and Dispositions for Peat Operations on Public Land”.

Only digital documents will be accepted for all supporting documentation in either Microsoft Word or Portable Document Format (PDF) form.

The application for an SML must satisfy the requirements of the *Public Lands Administrative Regulation*. The following documents must be supplied with the application to meet the adequacy requirements under the Public Lands Administrative Regulation (PLAR):

- i. Biophysical Report;
- ii. Peat Development and Operations Plan;
- iii. Conservation and Reclamation Plan;

Once the application is accepted by the Director as complete, the application and supporting documentation will be reviewed for merit by regional operations staff and if necessary, subject matter experts. If additional information or clarity is required, supplemental information requests (SIRs) may be directed to the applicant before a decision is made to approve or refuse the application.

A legal survey of the SML disposition will be required as a condition of the disposition.

2. Allocation Criteria

Prior to making a decision whether to authorize a peat operation, the Director shall consider whether the proposed use of public land is consistent with the guiding goals and principles in this policy directive.

Suitable public land may be allocated for peat operations as follows:

1. Peat operations in Alberta will only be available on suitable public land outside of high sensitivity areas to avoid sensitive wildlife and fisheries habitat. Peatlands may be allocated for peat operations provided the land availability is not in an excluded area as identified on the Peat Availability Map (see appendix 1 or associated GIS shape files).
2. Environment and Parks will honour existing approved peat dispositions whose lands that are subject to the creation of future Provincial Park and protected areas.
3. Environment and Parks will address peat applications in the order they are received provided that a complete application is submitted to the department for review.
4. Where there is competing demand for a peatland, the department will have the option to allocate the land through a bid process.
5. Only one (1) SME will be issued to a peat company per bog for exploration purposes, valid for two (2) years.
6. A maximum of 500 hectares will be allowed to be held per SML disposition.
7. All peat dispositions must be designed to contain a buffer between the lease boundary and the production fields, including in-situ reclamation material donor sites.
8. If entry on a SML disposition has not occurred prior to time of expiry (within 10 years of the initial 15 year term), an application for disposition renewal by the existing disposition holder may not be approved.

9. Additional allocation of a peat resource to an existing disposition holder may be allowed if that disposition holder meets the Environment and Parks approved timelines for reclamation on both their historical and current footprint as outlined in section 5.0.
10. Lands for peat feeder operations may be allocated provided that:
 - the applicant provides sufficient proof that they have a contractual agreement established with at least one existing commercial peat operator (copy of agreement or signed declaration by both parties) included as part of the Peat Development and Operations Plan;
 - the applicant satisfies the department that the feeder operation is viable (e.g. a business plan) and;
 - the proposed feeder operation is subject to the same criteria and requirements that applies to other commercial peat operations.
11. Access to peat resources in Special Access Areas and other wildlife and habitat ranges must meet current access restrictions and setbacks accordingly. The desired outcomes for the Special Access Areas include:
 - a. Maintain natural habitat viability of wildlife refuges (i.e. source habitats)
 - b. Maintain intent and structure of existing Buck for Wildlife project areas.
 - c. Reduce excessive mortality of wildlife from all sources.

The locations of these Areas are currently defined in GIS shape files available from:

https://extranet.gov.ab.ca/srd/geodiscover/srd_pub/LAT/FWDSensitivity/SpecialAccessZone.zip.

3. Term of Disposition

The term of the SME disposition shall be for two (2) years.

The term of the SML disposition shall be for fifteen (15) years and renewable in ten (10) year increments.

4.5 Peat SML Disposition Renewals

A peat operator that is a holder of an existing SML disposition that is expiring may apply to renew the disposition. The Director in addition to section 18 of PLAR, may consider the following prior to making a decision to renew a disposition:

1. There are no outstanding financial obligations to the Crown;
2. The disposition is being actively being harvested or active peat operations have ceased and reclamation has been initiated or is in the process of being initiated;
3. The disposition is in good standing and any compliance issues have been adequately dealt with or an approved plan is in place that will bring the disposition back into compliance.

The disposition holder is required to submit the following as part of their application for renewal of a SML disposition for a peat operation:

1. Updated site information requirements including:
 - a. **Site Map.** Provide an updated site map at a scale of not less than 1:10,000 showing all peat production fields, buffer areas, and any in-situ donor areas, all drainage works, and all facilities on the site in relation to the approved project area boundary.
 - b. **Surface Profile.** Provide a separate map at a scale of not less than 1:5,000 showing the current surface profile of each disturbed area within the peatland.
 - c. **Peat Surface to Mineral Soil Profile.**
 - i. For any peatland that has no previous peat profile data, provide core sample data of remaining depth of peat to the underlying mineral soil with corresponding Van Post humification values. Identify all areas that will not be harvested. The data should be collected systematically of sufficient frequency approved by the land manager that will fully characterize the existing peatland. Record and show the core profiles with the cross-section information.

- ii. For any peatland that at the initial application stage was fully characterized with peat profile data, provide information comparing remaining depths of peat to mineral soil, to the original surface elevation.
2. A revised *Peat Development and Operational Plan* that describes current operations to the end of the peat operation, including any revised opening, closure, and progressive reclamation schedules.
3. An updated *Conservation and Reclamation Plan* outlining decommissioning of the site and the reclamation work that will be undertaken to reclaim the site to an equivalent land capability standard.
4. A legal survey of the disposition if one has not previously been provided.

5.0 Peat Reclamation

The reclamation management strategy for peat operations is founded in adaptive management that integrates reclamation within planning, construction, operations and closure. Reclamation outcomes must be focused on restoring to the pre-disturbance vegetation community type as outlined in the *Requirements for Conservation and Reclamation for Peat Operations in Alberta*, unless otherwise approved.

Reclamation will be enhanced within peat operations by creating a program to:

- Require progressive reclamation on all new peat operations greater than 250 ha (dispositions approved after January 1st, 2014), and
- Address the historical footprint (dispositions approved prior to January 1st, 2014)

5.1 Reclamation Planning for New Peat Operations

A key component of the reclamation management strategy is the minimization of footprint and loss of peatlands by adopting progressive reclamation measures.

1. All project areas larger than 250 ha will require the peat operator to incorporate progressive reclamation into the peat operation, as outlined in the *Requirements for the Conservation and Reclamation Plans for Peat Operations in Alberta*.
2. Project areas smaller than 250 ha where progressive reclamation planning may not be feasible will require the peat operator to specify reclamation timelines and milestones into their peat operation's approved Conservation and Reclamation (C&R) Plan, as outlined in the *Requirements for the Conservation and Reclamation Plans for Peat Operations in Alberta*.
3. For all peat operation applications approved after January 1, 2014, the reclamation timelines and associated milestones, must be approved by AEP through the C&R Plan.
4. Reporting requirements are to include projected and actual timelines for clearly defined reclamation milestones (e.g. reclamation initiated, reclaimed status, reclamation certified) that align with the Requirements for the C&R Plan.
5. All reporting requirements must be met by the disposition holder at the time of new application for future disposition issuance.

5.2 Requirement to Reduce Historical Reclamation Liabilities

Reducing the reclamation liability of a peat operator's historical footprint is a key outcome of this Directive. For the purpose of this Directive, historical footprint includes the surface material leases and the associated dispositions. A peat operator with un-reclaimed historical disturbances will be required to have an approved Historical Operating Report prior to being eligible for access to new public lands to conduct peat operations.

1. All peat operators with 500 ha or greater of cumulative disturbed and un-reclaimed lands (not at reclaimed status or reclamation certified) prior to January 2014, will be required to have an approved Historical Operating Report that establishes a reclamation strategy with approved end land use and reasonable timelines for achieving reclamation certification.
2. Reclamation outcomes will be met through both AEP and industry agreed-to timelines for reclamation.
3. No new applications for peat operations on public land will be accepted until the plan has been approved.
4. Once the Historical Operation Report is submitted and approved, a peat operator may apply for new dispositions if all other aspect of the policy has been met.
5. Each approved plan will require a peat operator to commit to having 30% of the historical footprint at a reclaimed status or reclamation certified by January 1st, 2022.
6. The calculation for the 30% requirement is as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Reclaimed Status Area} + \text{Certified Area}}{\text{Total Disturbed Area}} \times 100 = > 30\%$$

7. The approved reclamation timelines will apply until the historical footprint is reclamation certified.
8. Tracking progress and reclamation outcomes must occur through consistent reporting cycles.

5.3 Donor sites

Successful reclamation of a peat operation using the peat transfer method requires the use of plant propagules obtained from a donor location either from within the lease boundary of the project area, or from another peatland.

1. All donor sites need to be identified in both the Peat Development and Operations Plan and the approved Conservation and Reclamation Plan.
2. All donor sites (outside of project area) and access to them need to be authorized as an associated activity (see TFA Guidelines 6th Ed.) and their disturbance addressed in the approved Conservation and Reclamation Plan for the parent disposition.

6.0 Security for Peat Operations

1. Historical Peat dispositions issued before Jan 1, 2014 will not be subject to security.
2. Peat dispositions issued on or after Jan 1st, 2014 will be subject to security at a time this policy directive is approved.
3. The security amount to be assessed is specified in the Ministerial Order “*Public Lands Rents and Other Amounts Payable Order*” as amended from time to time.

7.0 Reporting

The purpose of the annual report is to describe actual peat operation activities completed during the past year. For reporting purposes, annual means a calendar year (January 1 – December 31). The information and the form in which it is reported is outlined in the document templates “Historical Operating Report (HOR)” associated with the Peat Reclamation Liability Program, and the “Annual Operating Report (AOR)” for Peat Operations as amended from time to time, or as additionally prescribed in the conditions of a specific disposition.

On or before the prescribed date of each year for each report, the disposition holder shall submit to the Director an annual report as follows:

Using the Annual Operating Report for Peat Operations, report the following for the previous calendar year:

1. Disposition holder name, project name, land disposition number, *Water Act* approval number, legal location, and date of submission.
2. Status of peat operations including all areas approved, disturbed, reclaimed and certified. Annual operations including depth of peat removed, annual peat production and volume of peat removed from the peatland. The volume of peat reported is to represent all the peat removed from the ground regardless of whether it is stockpiled or transferred to another facility. A peat operator is not to include the volume of bulk peat received from a feeder operation (to avoid double counting). Peat volume is to be reported in bulk cubic meters, uncompressed for royalty calculation purposes (i.e., convert bale equivalents).
3. The cumulative total of peat harvested, from the start of peat operations through the most recent calendar year based on previous annual reports.
4. For dispositions issued after January 1, 2014, any actual progressive reclamation activities undertaken. The information required for reclamation reporting must be obtained from the currently approved C&R plan³. Any changes to approved end land use must be discussed and approved by the reclamation specialist.
5. Using the Historical Operating Report, report the status on the progress of reclamation on a peat operator's historical footprint of peatlands disturbed prior to January 2014, as set out in the peat operator's approved historical peat disturbance reclamation liability plan.
6. Any required monitoring activity (water quantity, water quality, exceedances to water quality standard or to baseline condition of receiving waters, fish and wildlife, or reclamation outcomes). Analytical water quality data from an accredited laboratory is to be reported.
A signature to the declaration certifying that the information provided is complete and true.

8.0 Auditing

To ensure there is a fair return to Albertan's for the public land resources used for commercial purpose, peat operators like all other surface materials users will be subject to periodic audit and verification of the volume of extracted peat reported for royalty assessment purposes.

9.0 Transitional Measures

1. Applications supported with digital files of the three accompanying documents may be submitted by e-mail if the EDS system is not yet ready to support full electronic submissions. Provincial Approvals-Operations will facilitate the referral of the applications for review and decision making purposes. Peat operators will be advised when the department will be ready to accept full electronic applications and processing through the EDS system.
2. Consultative notations (CNTs) are an administrative tool held in the records of the Department to identify management intent for an area of land. A CNT does not convey rights to land. Expired CNTs for potential peat operations will be removed from government records at the time of policy implementation.

³ In this section the term "Development Area" is being used in place of "Production Field" for consistency with the C&R Requirement Guideline document.

3. SME or SML disposition applications for a peat operation submitted prior to the enactment of PLAR will be addressed under the former *Disposition and Fees Regulation*.

10.0 Associated Policy and Guidance Documents

- Guide AEP Operations 2016, No. 10 *Guide to Surface Materials Lease Information Requirements for Peat Operations*
- Policy AEP Land Policy 2016, No. 7 *Requirements for Conservation and Reclamation for Peat Operations in Alberta*
- Template *Annual Operating Report (AOR) Peat Operations*
- Template *Historical Operating Report (HOR) Peat Reclamation Liability Program*
- *Guidelines for the Administration and Maintenance of Applications and Dispositions for Peat Operations on Public Land.*

11.0 Review

To ensure that the directive is meeting resource management goals, this policy directive will be subject to review 10 years after the date of approval.

12.0 Repeals

This Directive replaces the following Directives:

- Policy Directive COM DIS 1975.1 Surface Materials Policy Relating to Peat Moss dated January 10, 1983.
- Policy Directive ESRD, Water Quantity, 2014, No.5 Water Act Considerations for Peat Mining/Harvesting Operations dated March 18, 2014.

13.0 Approvals

Original signed by:

Date: December 16, 2016

Kem Singh, Executive Director
Land Policy Branch
Environment and Parks

