

# Conservation and Reclamation INFORMATION LETTER

## Conservation and Reclamation Guidelines for Alberta

### NOTE

**This Information Letter replaces Information Letter 95-1 *Conservation and Reclamation Code of Practice for Alberta* to reduce any confusion that may arise as a result of the Codes of Practice released in September, 1996 pursuant to the Activities Designation Regulation.**

### APPLICATION

The Guidelines apply to specified land in Alberta as defined in the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* and the *Conservation and Reclamation Regulation*. Specified land means land that is being or has been used or held for or in connection with:

- The construction, operation or reclamation of a well, battery, oil production site, pipeline, transmission line, telecommunication system, mine, pit, quarry, peat operation or plant;
- The conduct or reclamation of an exploration operation for coal or oil sands;
- The construction or reclamation of a roadway; or
- The reclamation of a railway.

Specified land does not include federal land, land used solely for the purposes of an agricultural operation, or subdivided land used or intended for residential purposes.

Definitions for these terms are found in the *Conservation and Reclamation Regulation* (Alberta Regulation 115/93 as amended) and the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* (as amended).

### BACKGROUND

The Guidelines provide a general overview of the factors an operator should consider in conducting an activity. If an approval pursuant to EPEA is required for the activity on specified land, the conditions in the approval provide direction for the operator. If an approval is not required, detailed Environmental Protection Guidelines (available from Alberta Environmental Protection, Environmental Sciences Division) have been developed for some of the activities on specified land. Others are being developed by government and the affected stakeholders to provide direction. **Operators are responsible for knowing if they require an approval or are subject to a Code of Practice.**

The Guidelines, the Environmental Protection Guidelines, the conditions in an approval, the Code of Practice or the reclamation certification criteria form the basis for enforcement actions by the Department. Adhering to the Guidelines and the Environmental Protection Guidelines will help ensure successful conservation, reclamation and certification. The operator, the landowner or the Conservation and Reclamation Inspectors may request modifications to specific requirements to address site specific conditions.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- The Guidelines promote and encourage:
- The return of a disturbed site to a land capability equivalent to the pre-disturbance land capability. This capability must be sustainable under normal land management.
- Acceptance of pre-development soil, landscape and vegetation conditions as the usual target for post-development conditions. Where pre-development conditions are not known, off-site conditions will be used as the target.
- Recognition that land use may change on a reclaimed site, providing all directly affected stakeholders agree that the alternate use is acceptable, and that this change still meets the goal of equivalent land capability.
- Identification of potential soil, landscape and vegetation conservation concerns through pre-construction site assessment and planning.
- Conservation of the essential characteristics of the project site (e.g., soil, landscape, vegetation) to minimize post-construction remediation requirements.
- Awareness of the value of soil, the sensitivity of soil to disturbance and the difficulty of reclaiming degraded soils.
- Awareness of the importance of native vegetation and the need for protection and rapid re-establishment of vegetation that is compatible with the adjacent land.
- Monitoring all activities to ensure a complete record of conservation, degradation, mitigation and reclamation events.
- On-site supervision by personnel responsible for environmental quality control. Where this is not practical, thorough pre-construction planning and periodic site reviews should be undertaken.

- Progressive reclamation of disturbed land to minimize the amount of land disturbed at any one time.
- Site assessments following reclamation which provide a complete evaluation of soil, landscape and vegetation conditions. This assessment must be made prior to an application for a reclamation certificate.

## SPECIFIC FACTORS TO CONSIDER

### 1. Project Planning

- Communicate with the landowner, occupant and Conservation and Reclamation Inspector during the life of the project.
- Obtain all necessary approvals prior to starting work.
- Determine probable end land use for the site at the planning stage.
- Locate the site to minimize impact on natural resources (e.g., soil, vegetation, water and wildlife) and land use.
- Develop plans for conservation and reclamation.
- Develop waste handling and disposal plans as required.
- Schedule operations considering landowner's activities, climatic, soil, vegetation and wildlife concerns.
- Educate on-site personnel about the environmental concerns and protection plans.

### 2. Site Preparation, Construction and Operation

Keep all disturbances to a minimum.

Properly salvage and store soil materials to minimize soil loss and degradation. Separate topsoil from other salvaged soil (e.g., subsoil or spoil) to prevent mixing. Keep an accurate record of storage locations.

Contain and clean up all spills as soon as possible.

Document and report all spills immediately to Enforcement & Monitoring Di-

vision of Alberta Environmental Protection (780) 422-4505.

Notify the Conservation and Reclamation Inspector when a spill occurs.

Ensure contaminant spill contingency measures are in place before operations commence. Dispose of all wastes in an approved manner.

Place signage on all gates, fences and authorized access.

Avoid disrupting surface drainage.

### 3. Reclamation

Cleanup and remediate contaminants, or dispose of contaminants, to meet Alberta Environmental Protection requirements.

Recontour the site to be compatible with the end land use and to provide proper drainage and stability.

Control erosion.

Do not use topsoil for grading purposes.

Correct soil compaction where necessary.

Replace salvaged soils in the same sequence as found before disturbance unless otherwise directed by the Conservation and Reclamation Inspector.

Where required, use soil amendments to meet the reclamation objectives.

Use approved revegetation species that are compatible with the intended end land use.

Control noxious weeds.

Where required, use native species or mixtures that will allow the establishment of native species.

### 4. Land Management

Maintain and manage the reclaimed land until a reclamation certificate is issued.

## RECLAMATION CERTIFICATE

The *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act* requires an operator to reclaim land and to obtain a reclamation certificate (the *Conservation and Reclamation Regulation* provides for some exemptions from this requirement).

An inquiry will be held on the site to

determine reclamation success. The operator and the landowner are invited to the inquiry.

A fee is charged for reclamation certificate applications. Contact the Regulatory Approvals Centre, Alberta Environmental Protection at (780) 427-6311 for more information.

Refer to the appropriate Reclamation Certificate Application form and criteria for the information required when applying for a certificate.

The criteria may be modified to address site specific conditions. This must be done in consultation with the Conservation and Reclamation Inspectors and, where appropriate, with the landowner.

Ensure that all site conditions (landscape, soil, vegetation) meet the required criteria before applying for a certificate.

Ensure that all contamination has been identified and remediated before applying for a certificate.

## CONTACTS

### For Green Area public lands:

Alberta Environmental Protection,  
Forest Management Division,  
7th Floor, 9920 -108 Street,  
EDMONTON, Alberta T5K 2M4.

Phone: (780) 427-8474

Fax: (780) 427-0075

### For White Area public lands:

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural  
Development,  
Public Land Management Branch,  
Room 200, J. G. O'Donoghue Building,  
7000 -113 Street,  
EDMONTON, Alberta T6H 5T6.

Phone: (780) 427-6597

Fax: (780) 422-4244

### For all other lands:

Alberta Environmental Protection,  
Environmental Sciences Division,  
4th Floor, 9820-106 Street,  
EDMONTON, Alberta T5K 2J6

Phone: (780) 427-5883

Fax: (780) 422-4192