



Alberta Wetland Policy: A Shift in Values

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Alberta's Interim Wetland Policy: System Gaps

- **Decision Makers:**
 - Approach to wetland management is not clearly defined
 - Inconsistency in regulatory requirements/decisions
 - Lack a coherent set of provincial guidelines for regulators
- **Developers:**
 - Lack clarity, predictability, consistency in approvals processes
 - Growing uncertainty over future direction
 - Potential implications for future investment decisions
- **Social License:**
 - Perceived level of commitment to informed environmental management and responsible stewardship
 - Outstanding commitment under LARP
 - Perceived failure to address development pressures in the boreal

New Policy Context

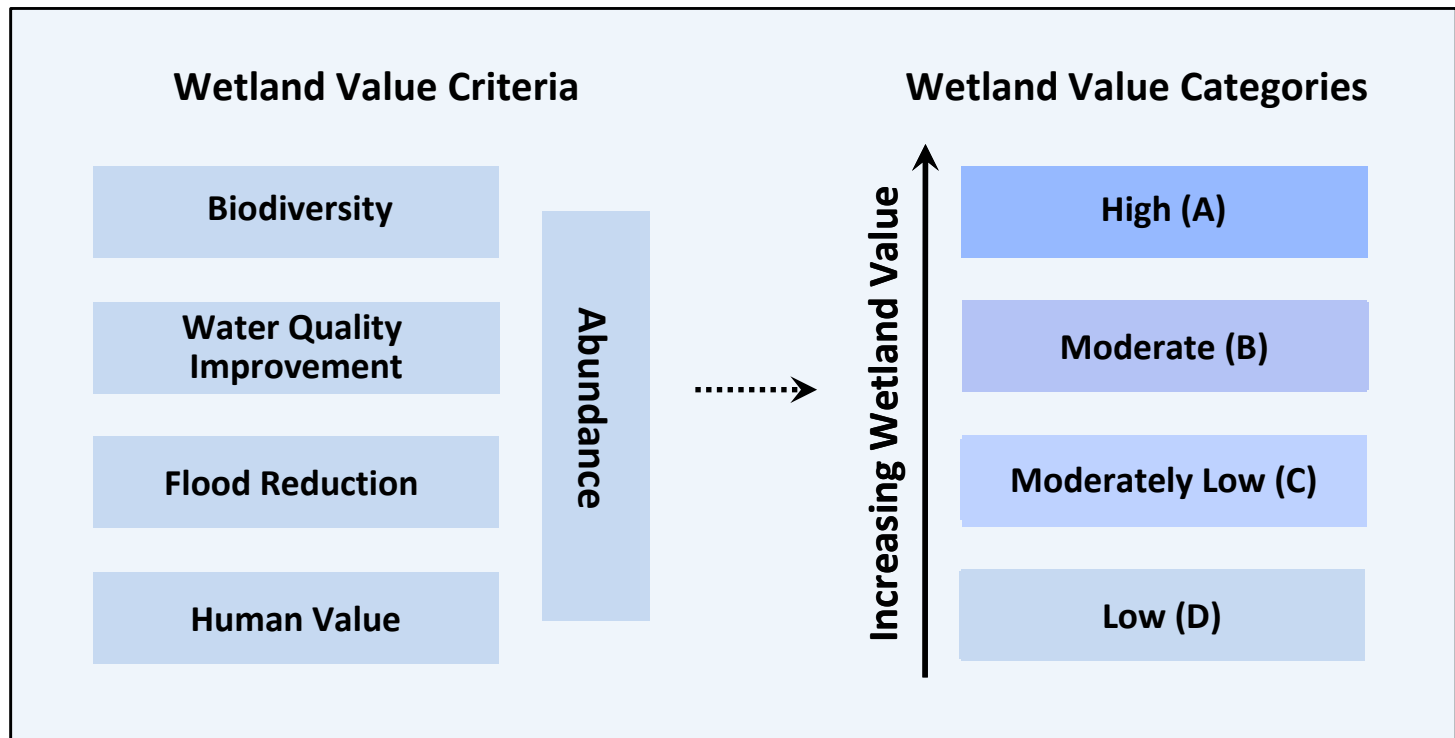
- Outstanding commitment for delivery of a provincial-scale wetland policy (W4L Strategy, 2003)
- Context and direction set under the Land Use Framework
- Expectations for an integrated, comprehensive, consistent approach to wetland management (IRMS).
- Enabled through the provincial Water Act
- To be effective from the date of implementation
- To enable a balanced and informed approach to wetland management.
 - Environmental performance, based on adaptive management
- Consistent, equitable, predictable, and objective

Alberta Wetland Policy

- Policy Goal:
 - To conserve, restore, protect, and manage Alberta's wetlands to sustain the benefits they provide to the environment, society, and the economy.
- Policy Outcomes:
 1. Wetlands of the highest value are protected for the long-term benefit of all Albertans.
 2. Wetlands and their benefits are conserved and restored in areas where losses have been high.
 3. Wetlands are managed by avoiding and minimizing negative impacts, and, where necessary, replacing lost wetland value.
 4. Wetland management considers regional context.

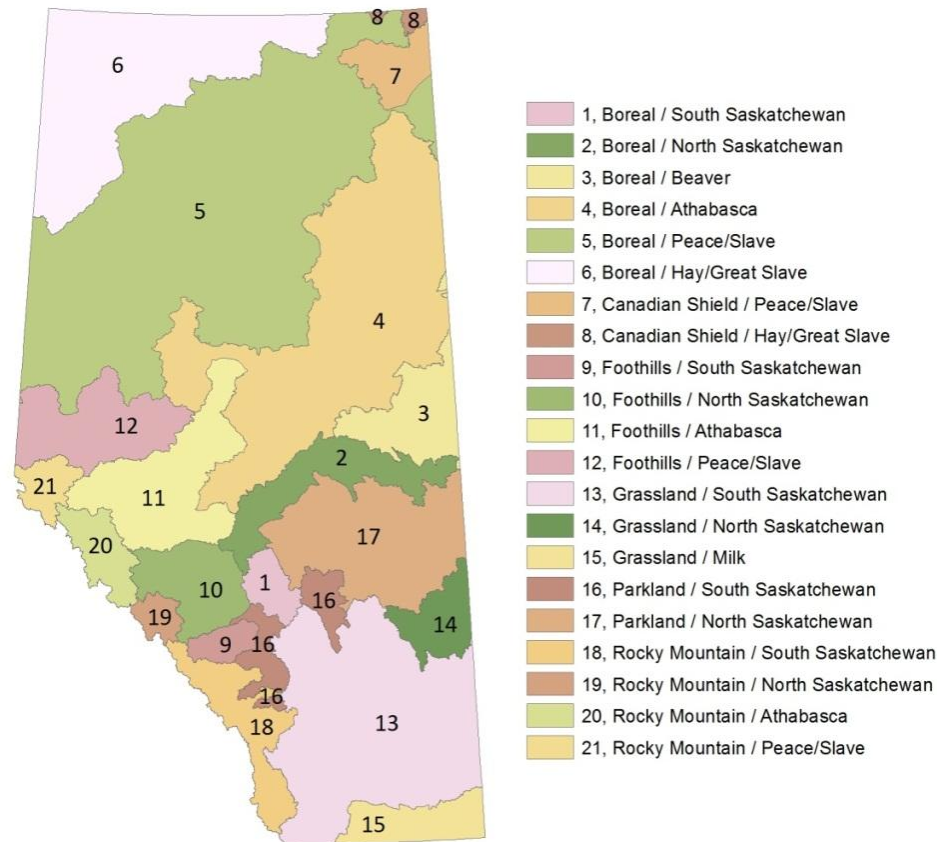
Relative Wetland Value

Wetlands will be assessed against the indicated criteria and assigned a relative wetland value of A (high), B (moderate), C (moderately low), or D (low).



Relative Value Assessment Units

- Spatial constraint supports meaningful comparison of wetlands at the Class (bog, fen, marsh, etc.) level.
- Allows adjustment of individual metrics to reflect significance/priorities within a given area.
- In situations where replacement opportunities are limited, RWVAU support restoration opportunities or needs in other priority areas.



Mitigation System



Avoid

Minimize

Replace

Avoidance – The preferred response is to avoid impacts on wetlands.

Minimization – Where avoidance is not possible, proponents will be expected to minimize impacts on wetlands.

Replacement – As a last resort, and where avoidance and minimization efforts are not feasible or prove ineffective, wetland replacement will be required.

Wetland Replacement

- Replacement costs reflect relative wetland value – A (High) to D (Low).
- Wetland reclamation commitments will help inform the determination of replacement requirements
- Replacement focused on wetland restoration, but enables support for wetland research, education, securement.
- Enabled through *in-lieu* fee payment or permittee-responsible replacement (agreed replacement plan).
- Wetland replacement will be spatially prioritized.
- Ephemeral water bodies not subject to replacement
- Additional considerations under the Public Lands Act

Replacement Ratios

The Wetland Replacement Matrix

		Value of Replacement Wetland			
		D	C	B	A
Value of Lost Wetland	A	8:1	4:1	2:1	1:1
	B	4:1	2:1	1:1	0.5:1
	C	2:1	1:1	0.5:1	0.25:1
	D	1:1	0.5:1	0.25:1	0.125:1

*Ratios are expressed as hectares of wetland

Of Interest...

- Constructed wetlands/storm water retention ponds
 - Not currently recognized as wetland replacement
 - To be recognized as partial replacement under the AWP, pending development of criteria and guidelines
- Qualified Wetland Science Practitioner
 - Criteria, qualifications, and a certification system to support establishment of a community of QWSPs
- Certified Mitigation Agents
 - Development of criteria, qualifications, certification system, and registry for mitigation agents in the province
 - Municipalities, consultants, ENGO, drainage districts

Next Steps

- Working groups to develop operational components.
 - Technical
 - Governance/Economics
 - Regulatory Systems
 - Education/Outreach
 - Knowledge Systems
- Targeted engagement of appropriate stakeholders (external and cross-ministry).
- White Area implementation (August 2014)
- Green Area implementation (August 2015)

Alberta

Questions?



Photo Credit: Clayton Spytz

Alberta

Environment and Sustainable
Resource Development

Cost of Replacement

In-lieu fees may be derived on the basis of:

- The average cost of wetland restoration work (established provincially).
- The cost of monitoring restoration success over the long term (established provincially).
- An administrative fee (established provincially).
- The average value of land *within the area of original wetland loss* (established locally).
- The cost of securing restored wetlands.
- Liability cost.