

# A Business Case for Wetland Retention and Restoration

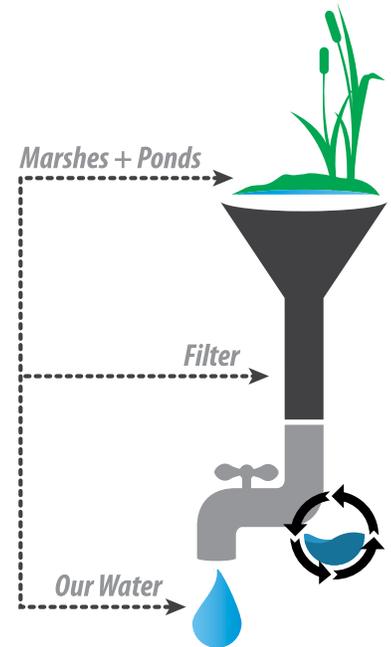
## Urban expansion. Transportation Infrastructure. Resource Development. Agriculture.

All of these things are good for the economy, but can have devastating effects on Alberta's wetland ecosystems. In fact, a large portion of Alberta's wetlands have been lost, and that loss continues at an alarming rate, resulting in significant loss of the valuable Ecosystem Services (ES) wetlands provide to Albertans.

As a result, we are seeing increasing impacts to our water quality and quantity. Contamination from runoff has diminished the quality of our lakes and drinking water supplies, while lost storage on the landscape has impacted freshwater quantity and groundwater recharge and increased the risk of flooding. Other negative effects include decreases in biodiversity, carbon sequestration and recreational opportunities.

The implementation and enforcement of an effective wetland policy that halts further loss of Alberta's wetlands, restores those that have been lost, and maintains natural habitat and clean water can help stop this.

**An effective wetland policy does not mean no growth. Protecting and restoring wetlands is a good economic investment. It makes good business sense.**



### Social return on investment ratio (SROI):

The societal benefits (economic, social and environmental) of a proposed activity when compared to the costs. An SROI ratio greater than 1 indicates the benefits are greater than the costs.

### Social Return on Investment for Wetland Retention and Restoration

Using an SROI approach, recent research in east-central Alberta clearly demonstrates that the benefits of retaining and restoring natural wetlands far outweigh the costs. The chart below shows that resources invested in the enforcement of an effective policy that halts the further loss of wetlands would yield a return of almost 7:1. Investment in low to moderate levels of restoration provides a smaller, yet still substantial return for every dollar invested.

	Initial Year	10 Years	30 Years
Retention	6.91	6.91	6.91
25% Restoration	1.26	3.32	4.64
50% Restoration	0.73	2.29	3.64



**Ducks Unlimited Canada**  
Conserving Canada's Wetlands

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## Protecting Alberta's Environmental Reputation

On the surface, it may seem like Alberta has conflicting interests of economic growth and environmental health. On the global stage, Alberta's environmental reputation is under increasing scrutiny. Our social licence is in question, but it doesn't have to be. Environmental sustainability and economic prosperity do not have to be at odds – in fact, they can be complimentary – and this is our chance to prove that while the world is watching. The environmental benefits of conserving and restoring wetlands are well documented, and now the economic and social benefits are clearer as well.

## In Summary

- \* When benefits like nutrient removal, carbon sequestration and recreation value are considered, investment in wetland conservation and low to moderate levels of restoration yield a high return on investment. Resources invested in the enforcement of an effective policy that halts the further loss of wetlands would yield a return of almost 7:1.
- \* Having a return of nearly seven dollars for every one dollar invested is an excellent investment option, while restoration scenarios as high as 50 per cent over 30 years still represent a significant net return. In regions upstream of Edmonton or Calgary or in areas near large urban centers, the return ratio can easily be much higher.
- \* It is possible for Alberta to have a provincial wetland policy that yields positive economic growth, environmental sustainability, and a positive political outcome. It is in the province's best interest to implement a policy that halts further loss of Alberta's wetlands, restores those that have been lost, and maintains natural habitat and clean water for future generations of Albertans.
- \* Wetland conservation is an effective means to meet Alberta's water quality and quantity needs in an environmentally credible and economically viable way.

## Alberta's wetland future can be a bright one with your help.

Water management, clean drinking water and healthy lakes are some of Albertans' top environmental concerns and enforcement of an effective wetland policy will address all of those. Alberta has an opportunity to be economically successful and environmentally responsible at the same time.

**There is no better option.**



*The health of Alberta's lakes is at risk. Wetlands keep our lakes healthy and clean so Albertans can enjoy them.*

*"As a manufacturer and distributor of agricultural nutrients, Agrium takes its social responsibility for nutrient stewardship very seriously. Agrium understands that wetlands are the kidneys of the environment managing surface water runoff, filtering nutrients and improving overall water quality. It is vital that we protect wetlands because they are an essential component of both rural and urban best management practices. That's why we support wetland conservation and restoration through our partnership with Ducks Unlimited Canada."*

— DOUG BEEVER  
SENIOR DIRECTOR SUSTAINABILITY  
AND STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS, AGRIVIUM



Ducks Unlimited Canada  
Conserving Canada's Wetlands

ducks.ca

## For more information contact:

Tracy Scott  
Head – Industry & Government Relations – Alberta

Phone 403-598-5708  
Email t\_scott@ducks.ca