

## **Wetland Conservation Offsets**

*Submitted by Alberta Environment and Parks*

### **What is a wetland?**

Wetland is land saturated with water due to by poorly drained soils, has water adapted vegetation, and various kinds of biological activity that are adapted to a wet environment. Wetlands are an important natural asset, and depending on local conditions can provide benefits such as source water, flood mitigation, water quality improvement and habitat for animals.

### **Wetland Policy and Management**

The Alberta Wetland Policy requires avoiding impacts to wetland. However, if impact to a wetland cannot be avoided, the person wishing to impact a wetland must apply to the Government of Alberta for an authorization under the Water Act. That impact could be from residential or industrial developments, highway or road construction, or agricultural uses. The government reviews the application to ensure that wetland alteration do not negatively affect neighbouring property or has negative effect on the environment. Depending on the type of wetland impacted, that impact is required to be replaced. This replacement, also called compensation, is described by the Wetland Conservation Offset Program.

### **Wetland Conservation Offset Program**

Wetland conservation offset is a measurable action taken to counteract an impact from an activity to a wetland. The measurable action includes restoration of previously drained wetland or construction of a wetland where one previously did not exist. This restoration or construction must follow specific rules (protocols) that are approved by the Government of Alberta. These rules are being finalized and will be made available here:

<http://www.waterforlife.alberta.ca/03356.html>

Landowners, if they choose to, can participate in the supply of wetland conservation offset by providing historically drained wetland areas to a wetland replacement agent to undertake wetland restoration work. The landowner and the replacement agent may come to a financial arrangement that compensates the landowner for the lost opportunity cost of restoring or constructing a wetland in land that has been used for agricultural uses.