

## Alberta Land Institute Wetlands Project

The Alberta Land Institute (ALI), based at the University of Alberta, is working on a project that evaluates mechanisms for wetland restoration and retention in Alberta. Among other objectives, the project will involve working with landowners to determine the full costs of wetland restoration including compensation.

Researchers at the University of Alberta and Western University in Ontario are partnering with Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, Alberta Innovates – Bio Solutions, City of Calgary, and Rocky View County on the project. The study area is north of Calgary in Rocky View County.

The researchers plan to test an innovative market-based instrument to help select wetland restoration sites and allow landowners to participate in the market to determine the price of restored wetlands. Reverse auctions make the seller (landowner) the bidder rather than the buyer (Ducks Unlimited in this case) in a conventional auction.

This is how the reverse auction is supposed to work.

- Researchers will let landowners know where there are dry or drained wetlands on their property and provide information on how good the restored wetland is expected to be based on their modeling work. This ties in with the Alberta Wetland Policy's functional value system of A, B, C, and D wetlands.
- The landowner will need to weigh the value of the lost production against the potential benefits of having the wetland and then decide what they want to bid to take that land out of production.
- Hopefully, a number of landowners will submit bids for restored wetlands at a price they think is fair. The research team will assess all the bids and decide which, and how many, to accept for restoration.
- The researchers have a fixed budget and want to restore as many wetlands as possible, which may lead one to think that only the lowest bids will be accepted. However, the researchers will make their decisions based both on the bid price and the expected functional value of the restored wetlands.
- Researchers and landowners will then sign contracts and the wetlands will be restored. There will be a long term monitoring process to assess the functions of the wetlands.

The Wetland Project provides an opportunity to demonstrate the ecosystems services that can be provided on private land and shed some light on the real value of those services to landowners. The project will provide environmental benefits for the watershed while gaining practical knowledge around restoration. It will also provide some experience in making the wetland policy operational on the ground.

For more information, check out the Alberta Land Institute website at [www.albertalandinstitute.ca](http://www.albertalandinstitute.ca).