

## **Alternative Land Use Services - sustaining agriculture, wildlife and natural spaces for all Canadians**

*Submitted by the ALUS team*

### ***What is ALUS?***

ALUS is a community led, farmer delivered program that provides payment to farmers and ranchers to enhance and maintain the benefits nature can provide to society. ALUS works by empowering local communities and puts them at the centre of conservation policy. ALUS then engages farmers and ranchers as productive environmental partners on the working landscape. ALUS farmers and ranchers in turn create benefits from nature necessary for everyone. These are called ecosystem services, and are made up of things such as clean air, clean water, erosion and flood control as well as habitat for pollinators, fish and wildlife.

### ***What does ALUS do?***

ALUS provides payment and support for the production of ecosystem services. Producers choose to enroll in ALUS by simply submitting an expression of interest outlining the environmental projects that fit with their operation. The priority is to restore and maintain marginal, unproductive, inefficient, or environmentally sensitive lands and put them into production of ecosystem services.

### ***What is ALUS paying for?***

ALUS is a “fee for service” model, that is, payment is made annually for the value of the ecosystem services produced in that year by the sites restored and maintained by the landowner. These services are often also referred to as environmental goods and services and often can be quantified as the tonnes of carbon sequestered or quantity of water filtered for example.

### ***Where did ALUS come from?***

ALUS was originally the idea of an innovative farmer named Ian Wishart of Manitoba and was quickly picked up by the Keystone Agricultural Producers in that province. After years of development in Manitoba and Ontario, together with the support of key contributors such as Delta Waterfowl Foundation and The W. Garfield Weston Foundation, ALUS landed in Vermillion River as the flagship Alberta community project. Today, a new organization, ALUS Canada, delivers the ALUS concept to rural Alberta communities Participating communities now include Parkland, Red Deer, Lac Ste. Anne, Mountain View, Wetaskiwin and Leduc with more expected to join.

### ***Where is ALUS heading?***

ALUS Canada is leading a nationwide effort to develop markets for the ecosystem services produced by participating landowners. Markets include those created by regulation (The Specified Gas Emitters Regulation and carbon offset market in Alberta for example) and those that are voluntary, representing efforts by corporations, governments and even ordinary Canadians to reduce their impact on the environment by engaging with producers.

ALUS is now operating in 5 provinces and will seek to build a national, sustainable program that recognizes the value farmers and ranchers can provide from the working landscape with a goal to create a healthy, landscape that sustains agriculture, wildlife and natural spaces for all Canadians.

### ***What does ALUS look like in Alberta?***

Agriculture is different from community to community. ALUS is designed to be flexible and adaptable to the unique characteristics of each community, farm, and ecosystem. Local delivery of ALUS is guided by multi-stakeholder Partnership Advisory Committees (PAC) in each ALUS community, made up of farmers, ranchers, County Councillors and Agricultural Services Board members, and technical expertise from government and non-government organizations. The PAC makes decisions on local projects, and provides advice on how to make good projects even better.

ALUS in Alberta is currently focused on wetlands and riparian area, with adjacent native range and forests also being enrolled. On-the-ground ALUS projects in Alberta include riparian management fencing, off-site livestock watering, portable shelters, tree planting, wetland restoration, buffer zone establishment around wetlands in annual crop fields, and more.

One of the principles of ALUS is integration. In Alberta, ALUS is integrated at the local and farm-gate levels, with other agro-environmental initiatives such as Growing Forward 2, Alberta Environmental Farm Planning and the Environmental Stream of the Agricultural Services Board program.



*Keith and Tracy Johnson beside a wetland on their custom grazing operation that they have enrolled in the ALUS Program. Here, they are being interviewed by Jim Fisher of Delta Waterfowl (and ALUS Canada) for a “Meet an ALUS Farmer” episode, available at <http://www.alus.ca/video/meet-alus-farmer-johnsons>*



*Kevin Ziola, an ALUS Farmer who has done multiple projects on his farm. He and his wife Roxanne are growing ecosystem services on over 25 acres of riparian area on their land, along 2.5 miles of stream. They are doing this through off-site watering, riparian management fencing, riparian tree and shrub planting, and installing mallard nesting tunnels.*

More information on the ALUS Program can be found at [www.alus.ca](http://www.alus.ca) or by contacting any of the people and communities delivering ALUS.