



Partner Profile: Ducks Unlimited Canada

Submitted by DUC

Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) is recognized as Canada's leader in wetland conservation and restoration. With operations located across Canada, DUC delivers on-the-ground habitat conservation projects, research, education programs and public policy work to improve conservation and management of Canada's wetlands. The foundation of DUC's conservation approach is partnering with landowners to assist them in conserving wetland and upland habitats through voluntary conservation agreements, easements, land donations and land purchases.

DUC was first established in 1938 by a group of outdoorsmen who noticed that wetland loss was contributing to declining waterfowl populations. This early realization spurred a greater quest to gain a more comprehensive understanding of wetland function on the landscape and how they contribute to a better quality of life for all residents in both rural and urban settings.

Supported by research, DUC operations and programs are guided by evidence-based initiatives that quantify and address the benefits that wetlands provide. These benefits, referred to as ecological goods and services (EGS), include improved water and air quality, reduced harm from drought and flooding, sequestration of carbon (which assists with climate change management), and greater biodiversity.

Effective collaboration is key to successful and mutually beneficial conservation programs. DUC actively works with landowners, industry, government and non-profit organizations to restore, conserve and protect wetlands. Cumulatively in Alberta since 1938, DUC has secured and completed 2.3 million acres of wetland restoration and conservation work and has registered almost 2,000 completed projects.

In Alberta, sectors that DUC works the most closely with are those related to agriculture, natural resources, and urban development. DUC's conservation toolbox includes the 10-year Wetland Restoration Lease program, the Revolving Land Conservation program (RLCP), and the Forage Conversion program.

These programs are attractive options for farmers, ranchers and landowners who want to incorporate sustainable conservation methods into their operations. The 10-year Wetland Restoration Lease program aims at restoring wetlands while letting landowners manage their land which may include haying or grazing. DUC pays for all wetland restoration costs and gives landowners an upfront payment and 10 annual payments for the restored wetland area based on current fair market value. Through RLCP, DUC purchases land and then puts it back into production by selling it to the agricultural community after conservation work is complete. The restored and protected land acres, often converted to forage, provides productive areas for nesting habitat. Proceeds of the sale are re-invested into other projects. The Forage Conversion program offers financial rebates to producers who convert cropland into forage acres. This is a particularly beneficial program especially during times of drought and grazing shortages.

While much progress had been done to restore, conserve and protect wetlands, more work is needed. It is estimated that up to 80 acres of wetlands are lost every day in Canada—the equivalent of 45 soccer fields. DUC's mission, whether it is informing governments on policy or helping farmers get the most from their land, will carry on so that wetlands and the benefits that they provide remain on the landscape for the benefit of all.

For more information, go to www.ducks.ca or call 1-866-479-3825.



Explore Ecosystem Services in a new way – Play Eco-Earner

Want to earn points for doing good things for the environment? Play Eco-earner, an ecosystem services game that promotes the concept of earning points for demonstrating good environmental management, using game principles and technology.

When we think of ecosystem services we often focus on the biophysical aspects of the environment. However, an important aspect of applying ecosystem service concepts is the ability to assign an economic value to nature. The Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute with Rocketfuel Productions Inc., and the Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity Network developed Eco-Earner as an outreach application to educate stakeholders on the importance and value of ecosystem services. Valuing nature can be a difficult concept to understand, measure and apply. We've made it simple – play Eco-earner at eco-earner.com to explore how we did this.

One of the primary objectives of the project is to allow industries, such as agriculture and forestry, to consider their impact on ecosystem services in a way that encourages innovation and competitiveness, as well as environmentally responsible decisions. We want to empower people with knowledge so that they can continue to improve the management of our resources and to make sustainable land-use decisions.

Discover a passion for the environment, earn points for good decisions, and learn more about placing value on ecosystem health – discover Eco-Earner, an ecosystem services game.

<http://eco-earner.com>