

Implementation of the Alberta Wetland Policy

The *Alberta Wetland Policy* (2013) provides the strategic direction and tools required to enable informed wetland management decisions in the long-term interest of Albertans. The policy will minimize the loss and degradation of wetlands, while allowing for continued growth and economic development in the province. It replaces *Wetland Management in the Settled Area of Alberta: an Interim Policy* (1993).

White Area implementation of the *Alberta Wetland Policy* began on September 1st, 2014, and will be followed by Green Area implementation on September 1st, 2015. From September 2014 to June 2015, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD) will publicly and sequentially introduce a series of directives, guides, and tools that will enable White Area implementation. This approach will permit Albertans to begin preliminary application of the tools and systems enabled under the new policy, and to assess how the new policy will affect their respective activities. A list of directives, guides, and tools, in conjunction with expected public release dates will be posted and regularly updated on the ESRD website.

Education and outreach programs, as well as training opportunities for various stakeholder groups across the province, will accompany the implementation process. This will help ensure that Albertans understand the various aspects of the new policy, as well as any potential implications for their respective sectors and activities.

As of **June 1st, 2015**, proponents will be expected to submit wetland-related *Water Act* applications in accordance with new requirements established under the *Alberta Wetland Policy*. This coincides with the beginning of the field season for conducting wetland field assessments.

Given the significant period of overlap between existing and new policy, the following points of clarification have been developed for White Area implementation:

- **Where planning for development in wetlands commences after September 2, 2014:**
Water Act applications should be prepared in accordance with directives, guides, and tools under the *Alberta Wetland Policy*, as they become available.
- **Where wetland field assessments are completed prior to or on May 31, 2015:**
ESRD and the Alberta Energy Regulator will continue to receive and assess *Water Act* applications for development in wetlands within the primary context of *Wetland Management in the Settled Area of Alberta: an Interim Policy* (1993).
- **Where wetland field assessments are completed on or after June 1, 2015:**
Water Act applications for development in wetlands will be evaluated in accordance with the new *Alberta Wetland Policy* Administrative Procedures.

As of September 1st 2015, the above process will be restarted for the Green Area, with the *Alberta Wetland Policy* being fully implemented across the province by June 2016.

The *Alberta Wetland Policy* does not apply retroactively to Water Act approvals issued prior to the policy implementation date. Any pending Water Act applications for which no decision has been made may be grandfathered under the Interim Policy (1993), if the impact of wetland development is not fundamentally changed from the original application. *Alberta Wetland Policy* implementation remains subject to the signing Director's discretion, and may vary on an individual project basis

As part of a comprehensive and integrated policy implementation process, ESRD will continue to work closely with the Alberta Energy Regulator and affected stakeholders to ensure an open, transparent, and informed policy rollout in the White Area.

For more information, contact:

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