

Nigel Douglas

From: Alberta Wilderness Association [Alberta_Wilderness_Association@mail.vresp.com]
Sent: November-04-10 5:30 PM
To: awa.nd@shaw.ca
Subject: AWA Wilderness & Wildlife Defenders - Wetlands



Alberta Wilderness Association

November 4, 2010



Dear Nigel,

The Alberta government has just proposed a vague, weak provincial wetland policy rather than adopting the widely supported no-net-loss policy recommended by its own advisory group. Wetlands are key to Alberta's water supply, water quality and wildlife. We ask you to please e-mail key decision makers soon to let them know that Alberta needs a clear no net loss wetland policy.

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Speak up for Alberta's Wetlands!

AWA
www.AlbertaWilderness.ca
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Speak Up for Alberta's Wetlands!

Background

Wetlands Matter

- Cover about 20% of Alberta's overall area, 40% of northern Alberta - critical for water security and wildlife habitat
- Give drought and flood protection by absorbing spring runoff and stormwater, then slowly releasing water, and by recharging groundwater ; improve water quality by reducing erosion and sediment runoff and by filtering metals and fertilizer nutrients
- Areas of high biodiversity; crucial habitat for threatened woodland caribou, sensitive amphibians, migrating and breeding ducks and geese
- about 2/3 of Alberta's prairie wetlands or 22,700 sq km lost by 2007; unknown wetland loss in northern boreal forest

Current Wetland Policy in Alberta

- For "settled area" (just over half of Alberta, mostly private lands), there is a no net loss policy: if wetlands are destroyed by a development, they must be replaced
- For unsettled public lands region, no specific wetland policy, but land should be returned to 'equivalent land capability', which has tended to favour forests over wetlands
- Proposed Alberta Water Council No Net Loss Policy

- After three year process, in 2008 23 of 25 sectors of Alberta Water Council supported a clear policy to 'maintain wetland area and benefits' at a provincial level ; allowed for regional wetland loss if offset elsewhere in the province
- Two sectors, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and Alberta Chamber of Resources, stated this was too costly for oilsands mine operations

The Issue

The Government of Alberta on Oct 29 proposed a policy that is significantly weaker than the widely supported no net loss principle:

- rejects no net loss, states vague goal to "sustain the benefits" of wetlands
- would base a wetland's value on unscientific 'abundance' on the landscape, so as to greatly downgrade northern wetlands

There was no financial evaluation at all by the Government of Alberta on the oilsands mines' claim that no net loss was unaffordable. AWA's analysis shows that the flexible 'no net loss' policy recommended by the Alberta Water Council would cost oilsands mine operations at most 50 to 60 cents per barrel.

Take Action

Please consider these key messages in your e-mail

- Alberta should adopt a clear no net loss provincial wetland policy, not the vague unclear proposed policy.
- Most of Alberta, and most Alberta industries, are already under a no net loss policy on private lands that is working well to prevent further loss of wetlands crucial to our future water security. The proposed policy will be arbitrary and difficult to implement, and most likely bring further loss in both north and south. A flexible no net loss policy should replace some of northern wetlands being lost to development and allow for offsets in other areas, as the Water Council proposed.
- To extend to the northern public lands, only the oil sands mining sector said they couldn't afford it, but the only economic analysis actually done to check this, by AWA, shows it is very affordable – at most 50-60 cents per barrel.

Please e-mail Premier Ed Stelmach at: premier@gov.ab.ca

Environment Minister Rob Renner: medicine.hat@assembly.ab.ca

And if possible your own MLA (contact info at http://www.assembly.ab.ca/net/index.aspx?p=mla_home)

And don't forget to send us a copy to awa.cc@shaw.ca

Thank you for speaking up for wetlands!

Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action

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