

Vermilion River Watershed Restoration & Enhancement Project

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply to the Application for funding under the VRW Restoration & Enhancement Project.

Applicant – the landowner submitting a completed Application Form to restore or enhance a wetland(s) or riparian area(s), or establish a riparian buffer(s) as Eligible Projects within the Vermilion River watershed and meets the Eligibility criteria.

Application Form – the prescribed Application Form for funding under the VRW Restoration and Enhancement Project.

Application – consists of the completed Application Form with the signed Applicant Declaration page, and other documents that the Applicant submits with the Application Form.

Approval Letter – the Letter sent out by the NSWA Executive Director to the Applicant notifying the Applicant that his/her proposed project in the submitted Application Form has been approved for funding through the VRW Restoration & Enhancement Project along with details on the total funding provided, amendments (if any) to the proposed project, conditions; and schedule of deliverables, invoices and payments.

Approved Project – is a landowner proposed project that has received an Approval Letter, and meets the Eligibility criteria (Please see ELIGIBILITY document).

BMPs – Agricultural Beneficial Management Practices recommended by Alberta Agriculture and Forestry.

Degraded – a condition of an ecosystem when it has lost some of its functions due to human activities and is capable of natural recovery upon restoration. (VRW Restoration & Enhancement Project does not cover 'degradation' due to natural processes).

Deliverables – specified area of wetland or riparian area that is restored or enhanced, or riparian buffers established, within a specified period of time as stated in the Approval Letter.

Ecosystem – a community of interacting living organisms and their physical environment, such as wetlands, riparian areas, aquatic, and uplands (terrestrial) ecosystems.

Enhancement - increasing one or more functions performed by an existing wetland/ riparian area beyond what currently or previously existed.

Lost – a condition when an ecosystem has lost all of its functions; physically obliterated – filled-in, drained, built-upon, or put to other uses (examples: agriculture; urban, commercial, industrial and recreational development; or infrastructure).

Project Term – the period between the start date and the end date for an Approved Project stated in the Approval Letter.

Project Work Schedule – the project work schedule stated in the Approval Letter for an Approved Project.

Restoration – is the rehabilitation of a degraded wetland /riparian area, or the re-establishment of a former wetland/riparian area, to a pre-disturbance condition (refer to historical documents if available) or as close to that condition as possible (refer to current existing natural condition). Note: The recovery of a restored site after the initial restoration efforts or intervention may take decades (beyond the VRW Restoration and Enhancement Project period).

VRW Restoration & Enhancement Project – is the short name for the Vermilion River Watershed Wetland and Riparian Areas Restoration & Enhancement Project (Please see the INTRODUCTION document, Table 1).

*Note: Riparian areas of rivers/streams and lakes may have their respective **riverine or shoreline wetlands**. The areas around wetlands may be considered riparian areas. However, for the purpose of the VRW Restoration & Enhancement Project, riparian areas and riparian buffers refer to areas adjacent to a river, stream or lake (which are the main focus of VRW Restoration & Enhancement Project); while wetlands refer to **isolated wetlands** (completely surrounded by land) for example, marshes and shallow open water, and the area around a wetland is a wetland buffer.*

Riparian areas – are transitional between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and are distinguished by changes (from upslope to downslope) between the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, in soil characteristics, soil moisture, vegetation and other living organisms, microclimate and other natural processes. They include those portions of the terrestrial ecosystem where there are exchanges with the aquatic ecosystem in the provision of food source, nutrients, and organic matter. Riparian areas are adjacent to perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral streams and lakes, and include their existing riverine or lake margin wetlands. Note: The establishment and maintenance of riparian buffers around wetlands is considered as a form of wetland enhancement.

Riparian buffer – is a buffer of perennial vegetation between the top of the bank (of a river, stream or lake) and the edge of a crop field. Its purpose is to minimize potential impacts of operations on the adjacent water body. The establishment of a Riparian buffer is an Eligible Project. The minimum recommended buffer width is 5 - 6 m; wider widths of 20 to 30 m are strongly recommended.

Wetlands – are lands saturated with water long enough to promote formation of water altered soils growth of water tolerant vegetation, and various kinds of biological activity that are adapted to the wet environment (Alberta Wetland Policy, 2013). Wetlands generally include sloughs, marshes, swamps, bogs, fens, and shallow open water (Alberta Wetland Policy, 2013). Marshes and shallow open water (also called sloughs) are commonly found in the Vermilion River watershed. Common indicator vegetation includes cattails, bulrushes, burr reed, sedges, and willows. Based on location on the landscape, wetlands can be '**isolated**' (within uplands), **riverine** (at the edge of streams), or **shoreline** (lake margin) wetlands. VRW Restoration & Enhancement Project is focused on isolated wetlands; riverine and lake margin wetlands are covered under Riparian areas.

Wetland buffer – is a buffer of perennial vegetation between the edge of the wetland and the crop field. Its purpose is to minimize potential impacts of operations on the wetland as well as protect wildlife species that use the area around the wetland as habitat. VRW Restoration & Enhancement Project considers the establishment of a wetland buffer as a form of wetland enhancement. The minimum recommended buffer width is 5 - 6 m; wider widths of 10 to 20 m are strongly recommended.

References:

- Fischer, R. A. and Fischenich, J. C. 2000. Design Recommendations for Riparian Corridors and Vegetated Buffer Strips. US Army Engineer Research and Development Centre, Environmental Laboratory, MS, USA.
- Government of Alberta. 2013. Alberta Wetland Policy.
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- Mitsch, W. J. and Gosselin, J. G. 2000. Wetlands. John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- National Academy of Sciences. 2002. Riparian Areas: Functions and Strategies for Management. US National Research Council.
- Stewart et al. 2010. Field Manual for Buffer Design for the Canadian Prairies. Agriculture and Agrifood Canada.
- USDA, NRCS. 2008. Hydrogeomorphic Wetland Classification System: An Overview and Modification to Better Meet the Needs of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. United States Department of Agriculture Technical Note No. 190-8-76.