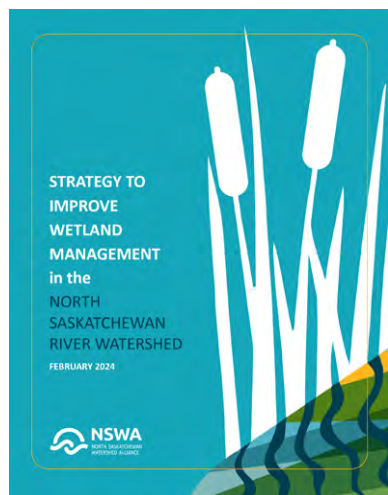


Summary of the Strategy to Improve Wetland Management in the North Saskatchewan River Watershed



- Increase the amount of wetland area in the NSRW, improve the overall condition of wetlands in the basin, and build upon ongoing wetland management.
- Set actionable goals to prevent further wetland loss, conserve those that remain, restore historical wetlands where feasible, and increase the many critical functions they provide, such as sequestering carbon, reducing erosion, and storing water.
- Acknowledge challenges and build better capacity for wetland restoration to improve
 - limited understanding of historical loss of wetlands
 - knowing where and how to construct new and functioning wetlands
 - capacity to complete wetland-related work across the basin
 - monitoring wetland health
 - policy enforcement
 - education and communication gaps

Creating the Strategy: Background & Steps

- **Alberta's Wetland Policy** (GOA, 2013) recognized the value of wetlands, provides for their protection, and drives the requirement to replace lost wetlands when the situation cannot be avoided.
- The Strategy is a product of multiple workshops and conversations (2021-2022) with municipal staff, government employees, and non-profit organizations in the NSR watershed.
- Successful implementation of the Strategy will require ongoing dialogue among governments, Indigenous communities, industry (including developers), non-profit organizations, stewardship groups, landowners, and the public.

Capacity Gaps Addressed by the Strategy

Wetland management capacity gaps identified and assigned to capacity categories:



Financial: Funding for monitoring, maintaining and restoring wetlands. Including funding for municipalities to incentivize and compensate landowners.



Human Resources: Lack of staff and stewards to lead wetland construction and restoration projects. More compliance officers needed at the institutional level.



Institutional: Provincial government's need to have greater capacity to protect wetlands; local government's capacity to communicate the importance of wetlands & their role as green infrastructure.



Social: Ensure that municipal officials understand the value of wetlands in the NSRW for community vision and planning; the public as motivators towards better wetland BMPs by landowners, industry, and developers.



Technical: Training and competency within communities to review development applications impacting wetlands; integrate wetlands into strategic planning, using appropriate data.

The Four Strategies

Workshop dialogue and input identified 34 goals to address current gaps and these fall under four strategic areas:

STRATEGIES



Collaborate and Take Action

Set and then achieve wetland restoration targets for the NSR watershed through multi-sector collaborative action.

GOALS

- o Work collaboratively with communities, governments and organizations for: engagement, outreach, collaborative partner programs, liaison between landowners and organizations
- o Listen to and partner with indigenous communities to create better understanding of wetland health objectives and partnership or co-creation
- o Continue to support the work of the Subwatershed Alliances and watershed stewardship groups
- o Form a Community of Practice for Wetland Conservation & engage with Alberta NAWAMP



Build and Mobilize Knowledge

Inform progressive wetland management in the NSR watershed through targeted research, mobilizing relevant knowledge, and augmenting management tools.

- o Build wetland knowledge through GIS inventories and maps of wetlands, wetland catchment areas, habitat connectivity, recharge and discharge areas, priority sites for conservation and restoration
- o Provide training opportunities with incentives for municipalities, Indigenous communities, and organizations to increase their wetland knowledge, monitoring capacity, and sustainable management within the watershed
- o Work with academics and communities to better understand cultural and social values associated with wetlands through qualitative research
- o Mobilize wetland knowledge through data knowledge and sharing, collaborating with wetland practitioners, public awareness and literacy, supporting other partners working to implement this strategy



Optimize Planning, Policy, and Financial Programs

Align and enhance planning, policy, finance, and compliance actions across municipal and provincial partners.

- o Set wetland conservation and restoration targets in the NSR watershed
- o Develop Stormwater Management Plans (SMP) that include wetlands among the assets for reducing flooding and improving water quality from stormwater
- o Municipalities: Incorporate setbacks from waterbodies into various planning & development documents & land-use bylaws
- o Incentivize landowners to conserve, restore, enhance wetlands
- o GOA: Improve regulatory processes to enforce unauthorized wetland removal
- o GOA: Set wetland health objectives & monitoring standards



Implement Wetland Monitoring

Track and measure wetland status and restoration across the watershed, while expanding opportunities for wetland monitoring by citizens.

- o Identify high-priority wetlands for monitoring and develop inventory for trend assessments
- o Identify and collaborate on wetland monitoring programs and opportunities for citizen scientists and support this through a Community of Practice
- o Collaborate with organizations or communities conducting wetland monitoring in the NSRW and co-create indicators for wetland functions
- o Coordinate wetland monitoring across the watershed for shared resources, accountability and to fill capacity gaps