



**Release Date:** October 2, 2015

## **Albertans Want Stronger Wetland Protection in Oilsands Region**

A new survey reveals Albertans overwhelmingly support requirements for oilsands developers to offset their impacts to northern wetlands. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA), Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Northern Alberta (CPAWS Northern Alberta) and Keepers of the Athabasca urge the Alberta government to end the exemption of current and planned oilsands projects from provincial wetland policy, and to adopt a clear 'no net loss' goal for all of Alberta's wetlands.

"Northern wetlands are essential for the boreal forest to resist drought and fires," said Carolyn Campbell, conservation specialist with the Alberta Wilderness Association. "We hope that the government listens to Albertans who have once again confirmed their support for 'no net loss' of these wetlands."

"In light of climate change and the drought that we're experiencing, draining wetlands and damming rivers is very detrimental to our region and way of life," said Chief Trevor Mercredi of the Beaver First Nation.

"Alberta's wilderness and wildlife are at risk of disappearing if policies do not support a 'no net loss' approach to development," said Alison Ronson, Executive Director of CPAWS Northern Alberta. "Evidence shows that, without concerted efforts, the majority of areas impacted by industrial disturbance in Alberta's north do not recover, even after 35 years," she says.

Approved and in-application oilsands projects are now only required to conserve or restore a fraction of the wetlands area they affect. Oilsands mines permanently destroy peat wetlands that covered about half the pre-mining landscape. In situ projects have extensive impacts through roads and cutlines that divert or drain water flows to and within wetlands. The oilsands industry's significant unmitigated impacts to boreal wetlands pose severe risks to boreal forest water retention and carbon storage.

In a September 2015 Pembina Institute/EKOS survey, 95% of Albertans agreed that "oilsands companies should be required to conserve or restore an area of wetlands equal to what was disturbed by their operations."

### **For more information:**

Carolyn Campbell, Alberta Wilderness Association, 403-283-2025

Alison Ronson, CPAWS Northern Alberta, 780-424-5128 ext 309

Jule Asterisk, Keepers of the Athabasca, 780-805-1709