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RAMP

RIVER

PEOPLE

RESOURCES

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

## Habitat Management

At the federal level the [Policy for the Management of Fish Habitat](#) is in place to protect fish and wildlife habitats. At the provincial level A [Fish Conservation Strategy for Alberta](#) (2006-2010) is an important initiative to protect fish habitat.

### Federal – Policy for the Management of Fish Habitat

This [policy](#) is an extension to the [Fisheries Act](#) and lays out goals, objectives and strategies to be used in the management of fish habitats in Canada. The policy should be considered binding rather than merely advisory, because Fisheries and Oceans Canada demands "...a uniform and equitable level of compliance with statutes, regulations and policies, as necessary to manage and protect fish habitats in jurisdictions where the federal government manages fisheries ([4.1.2](#))" (Fish Habitat Management Branch, 1986).

Fisheries are an important renewable resource in Canada, not only economically, but in aboriginal culture and as an indicator of environmental health. As a result, the objective of the habitat management policy is the *Net Gain of Habitat for Canada's Fishery Resources*. The policy aims to achieve this objective in three ways: conserve existing habitat, restore damaged habitats, and create new habitats.

Conservation of existing habitats is based on the guiding principle of [No Net Loss](#) ; which is activated when the loss of fish habitat is unavoidable. The No Net Loss principle requires that new fish habitat be created to compensate for any existing habitat that is altered or destroyed. Compensation can be achieved through: (1) the restoration of damaged fish habitats through clean up and reconstruction to increase productive capacity; or (2) the creation of new habitat through the improvement of a site's physical, chemical or biological factors to increase productive capacity.



The Muskeg River provides habitat for wildlife and fish  
Source: Hatfield Consultants 2007  
(click to enlarge)

### Provincial – A Fish Conservation Strategy for Alberta (2006–2010)

A Fish Conservation Strategy for Alberta is updated every four years to make planning and management decisions for development in the oil sands region and for Alberta as a province. The Fish Conservation Strategy for Alberta is based on the wise management and sustainable use of wildlife and fish resources and their habitats. These ideas are integrated into the overall strategy goal:

*Maintenance of biodiversity and productivity of aquatic ecosystems helps to maintain healthy fish populations, which provide social and economic benefits to Albertans. Achieving sustainability of fish stocks and other aquatic resources requires that these resources, and the ecosystems that support them, be managed in such a way that their long-term viability and productivity are maintained for the benefit of future generations ([Alberta Sustainable Resource Development](#) , 2006).*

The Fish Conservation Strategy for Alberta sets out these guiding principles:

- The [No Net Loss Principle](#)
- Maintaining fish stocks through natural reproduction as opposed to fish culturing
- Maintaining fish biodiversity and avoiding the loss of species
- Dynamic management, updated according to the latest scientific studies and based on fundamental ecological principles
- Public involvement and education
- Associating costs with the use of fish resources in order to increase stewardship and pay for management initiatives
- The creation of publically owned waters for recreational use

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