

Natural Systems



Agricultural Water Stewardship on the Landscape



Saskatchewan is home to more than 16 million acres of wetlands, with about 4.6 million acres on farmland. Wetlands include rivers, lakes, potholes, peatlands and low-lying wet areas that may dry up during the growing season. They are important because they support wildlife and retain water on the landscape during runoff events, protecting downstream communities, infrastructure and water quality.

To better understand these wetlands, the Water Security Agency and partners created an inventory covering 47 million acres of Saskatchewan's agricultural land. This work shows that most wetlands in this area – about 86 per cent – are still undrained.

Farmers often use drainage to manage water on their land. When done properly, drainage improves farm productivity and efficiency, reducing use of inputs such as fuel and fertilizer, as well as improving soil health by removing excess water and reducing salinity. However, drainage must be managed responsibly to avoid flooding and protect water quality and habitat. The Water Security Agency promotes a co-ordinated approach where landowners work together in networks to plan and develop projects.

In 2025, the Water Security Agency introduced the Agricultural Water Stewardship Policy, which sets clear guidelines for drainage and wetland retention across agricultural lands. Unique within Canadian wetland management approaches, this policy applies a regional approach, with a baseline goal to maintain at least 40 per cent of wetlands in each watershed and up to 60 per cent in other areas. Higher retention goals may also be established for specific areas to address localized infrastructure, habitat and wildlife priorities. The policy was shaped through input from more than 80 organizations and Indigenous communities, as well as demonstration, research and pilot projects on Saskatchewan's farms.

The Water Security Agency is investing \$1 million over three years to monitor the policy and ensure its effectiveness. [Research](#) will focus on water quality, flooding, habitat and farm economics. Indicators such as the number of approved drainage projects will help measure progress in farm efficiency and food production. The Water Security Agency will continue to work with agricultural producers, industry, First Nations and Métis Peoples, conservation groups, government partners and researchers to fill knowledge gaps and identify policy refinements.

Other ministries also play a role. The Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Energy and Resources oversee development activities that may impact wetlands. Both apply environmental assessments and water management regulations, require mitigation and support conservation alongside responsible economic development. These co-ordinated measures provide a strong framework for protecting wetlands across Saskatchewan.

About 86 per cent of wetlands within Saskatchewan's agricultural land remain undrained.

Why It Matters

Saskatchewan's wetland management approach creates landscapes that can withstand both flooding and drought. It protects water quality for communities and industry, supports healthy fish and wildlife populations and strengthens a growing agricultural sector focused on healthy soils and sustainable practices.

Links to Related Information

[Agricultural Water Stewardship Policy](#)

[Agricultural Water Stewardship Research Program](#)

[Sustainable Saskatchewan – Agriculture](#)

[Explore other resilience stories](#)

