



CANADIAN
WETLANDS
ROUNDTABLE

ANNUAL REPORT

2019–2020

SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT
OF CANADA'S WETLANDS



Wetlands help to make our cities more resilient by providing natural protection against floods and storm surges, yet it is estimated that over 80 per cent of wetlands in or near urban areas have been lost.



wetlandsroundtable.ca



Mallards/©Ducks Unlimited Canada

This first Annual Report of the Canadian Wetlands Roundtable summarizes our 2019–2020 accomplishments, fiscal contributions and expenditures. It sets the stage for continued collaboration and investment in wetlands for the benefit of Canada and all Canadians.

The Canadian Wetlands Roundtable is committed to building and expanding partnerships with Indigenous governments and communities in support of Canada's National Reconciliation goals.

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Wetland loss and degradation across the Canadian landscape have not gone away.

Since the formation of the Canadian Wetlands Roundtable in 2016, we have worked with our members to establish priorities and secure seed funding and in-kind services to advance wetland conservation in Canada. This past year we tackled several specific projects that set the stage for building the business case for conserving our country's wetland habitats.

As part of our annual plan, we worked with a team of scientists and economists to update the valuation of Canada's wetlands for the social, economic and cultural well-being of Canada and all Canadians. We launched our website thanks to the generous support of Cabela's Outdoor Fund. And, we captured the attention of Canada's Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada in response to our recommendation that a National Wetland Inventory Task force be created.

These projects, as well as the coordination of various meetings, workshops and reports, have reinforced and reinvented the national dialog on the importance of wetland ecosystems and the benefits they provide. As we adopt new ways of doing business, the enthusiasm and participation of our members remains high, and keen interest from new partners, including Indigenous governments and communities, shows promise for expanding our efforts. Wetland loss and degradation across the Canadian landscape have not gone away. Now, more than ever, it is critical that conservation groups and governments collaborate with industries, such as agriculture, forestry, peat and oil and gas, to conserve our wetland base and find sustainable solutions to managing and conserving Canada's wetlands.

As Co-chairs, we are grateful for the commitment of our members and funders and to everyone that shares our vision and passion for wetlands.

Yours sincerely,



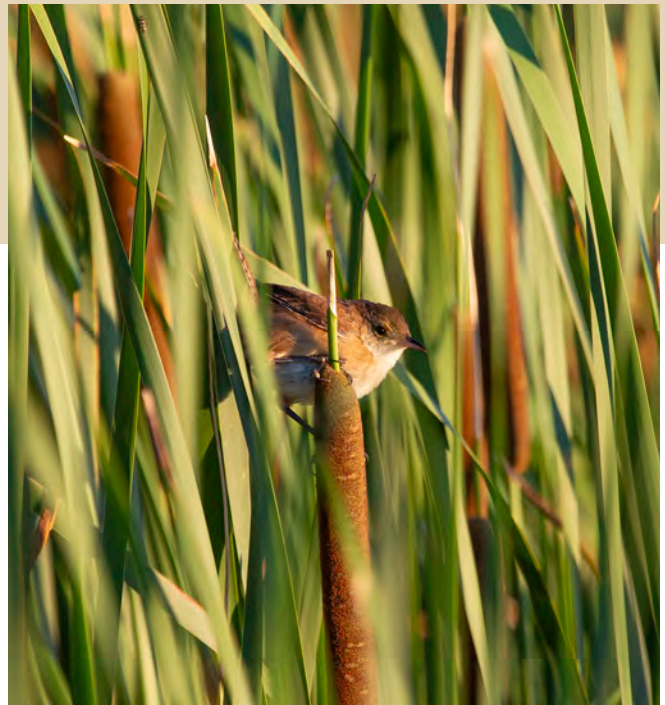
Frank Annau
(Co-chair, Canadian Wetlands Roundtable)
Director of Environment and Science Policy
Canadian Federation of Agriculture



Pat Kehoe
(Co-chair, Canadian Wetlands Roundtable)
Director, International Partnerships
Ducks Unlimited Canada

INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Wetlands Roundtable is a multi-stakeholder partnership of agriculture, conservation and resource organizations committed to advancing the responsible management and sustainability of Canada's wetlands. Our fundamental goal is to ensure wetland conservation across the country for the health and safety of all Canadians and for the thousands of species that depend on these habitats for their survival.



Canada is home to 25 per cent of the world's remaining wetlands—these wetlands are critical to biodiversity and support high concentrations of wildlife and plant species.
Pictured: Marsh Wren/©Ducks Unlimited Canada



The 16-metre tides of the Bay of Fundy's coastal wetlands are the highest in the world. The Beausejour Marsh (pictured) is a birdwatcher's paradise along the Atlantic Migratory Bird Flyway—one to two million shorebirds pass through this area every year./
©Ducks Unlimited Canada

Wetlands have been degraded or eliminated across 70 per cent of Canada's urban and rural, settled landscapes. The loss of these wetlands means that we have lost many of the benefits they provide—from preventing flooding and erosion and reducing greenhouse gases to providing thriving habitats for wildlife as well as recreational opportunities for people.

Responsible wetland management planning, decision making and implementation is critical to Canada's future, and indeed the future of our entire planet. Conservationists have long recognized the importance of wetlands for wildlife species and human recreational activities, and in the past several decades, wetland services have become more apparent—for example, wetlands play a critical role in the natural prevention of flooding and erosion, purify our water and mitigate climate change.

The Canadian Wetlands Round Table has identified four focus areas:

- *Science:* Promote improved wetland management and sustainability based on sound science
- *Management:* Support the development and implementation of effective and efficient wetland policies, programs, legislation and regulations with emphasis on landscape and watershed planning and responsible management
- *Stewardship:* Encourage the protection, conservation and responsible management of wetlands through strengthened regional, national and international partnerships that support wetland conservation
- *Engagement:* Communicate science, best practices and other solutions that support a balanced approach to wetland conservation, protection and responsible management

This realization and the pressures of climate change impacts has created an increased sense of urgency around the importance of wetland conservation. It has also been the impetus behind growing collaboration and investment among a diversity of resource sectors, landowner, Indigenous community, government and non-governmental organization partnerships to conduct research, develop best management practices and tools, and to implement wetland conservation projects across the landscape.

The Canadian Wetlands Roundtable aims to build on this ongoing and formidable work through four focus areas: science, management, stewardship and engagement.



Wetlands are biodiversity hotspots that provide recreational and educational opportunities for people of all ages to learn and explore./©Ducks Unlimited Canada

Background: Moose are at home in wetlands and feed on aquatic vegetation both above and below the water's surface./©Ducks Unlimited Canada

If we are going to have a strong, healthy and resilient Canada and Canadian population we need to invest in our wetlands. This includes promoting wetland conservation to new partners and audiences and reinforcing wetland values in terms of their environmental, social and economic benefits. In 2003, wetlands were valued at \$20 Billion to the Canadian economy and it is estimated that in 2020, that number has doubled. Our work will position wetlands as high-priority habitats that provide a multitude of natural infrastructure benefits that are an essential component of Canada's municipal, provincial and national conservation and climate change priorities and strategies now and into the future.

WHAT IS NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE?

It's using nature's tools — like wetlands — to solve challenges like stormwater runoff, erosion and flooding. More formally, natural infrastructure is defined as the use of naturally occurring ecological processes to generate infrastructure outcomes. *Ducks Unlimited Canada, 2020*

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2019–2020 PROJECTS

The Canadian Wetlands Roundtable received funding in 2019–2020 to undertake and advance the following projects.

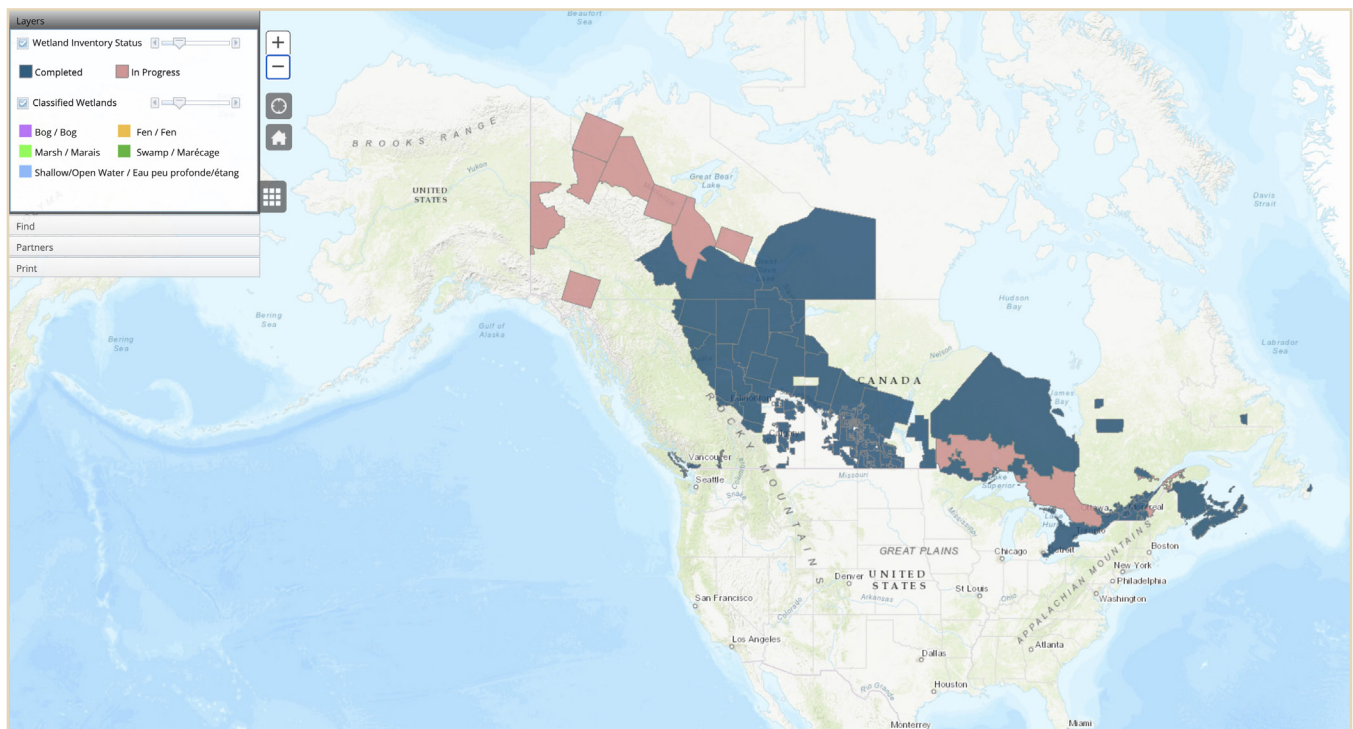
... a complete picture of Canada's wetlands does not yet exist...

In 2019, the Canadian Wetlands Roundtable created a subcommittee to revisit and build on the business case for Canada's Wetland Inventory. Although a national wetland inventory led by environmental non-governmental organizations and wetland experts has been underway since 2007, there are still significant gaps in geographical and temporal data. These gaps mean that a complete picture of Canada's wetlands does not yet exist making it extremely difficult to measure and monitor the status and health of these habitats, particularly when it comes

Project:
CANADA'S WETLAND INVENTORY
(In-kind and coordination support)

Building on the business case for a national wetland inventory

2016 WETLAND INVENTORY WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATION



This map is a summary of various inventories that meet Canadian Wetland Inventory standards. However, some components are outdated, and much of the country has not been covered, which is why a current Canadian Wetlands Inventory is needed. Current map available at <https://maps.ducks.ca/cwi/>.

to understanding and adapting to climate change and the impacts of land use like development, resource extraction and increased urbanization.

In March 2020, the Canadian Wetlands Roundtable wrote to the Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada (copied to the Minister of Science and Economic Development, the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities) recommending that a National Wetland Inventory Task force be formed to assess the state of wetland inventory and monitoring in Canada. Canada's National Wetland Inventory will enable informed and improved management of our wetlands and contribute significantly to wetland conservation and protection.

Project:
WETLAND ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION
(\$25,000)

Updating the 1992 wetland management guide to reflect current scientific and economic methodologies

2017 ECOLOGICAL GOODS AND SERVICES WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATION

In 2019, the Canadian Wetlands Roundtable received funding (\$15,000) from Wildlife Habitat Canada to begin the process of updating the 1992 Wetland Evaluation Guide, a standardized framework for functional and economic wetland evaluation. The guide established a solid foundation and is a great resource. However, nearly three



Water control structures regulate water flow in and out of wetlands helping to reducing flooding and drought./©Ducks Unlimited Canada

decades later, an update to reflect significant advances and challenges in wetland conservation science and current wetland economic values, is much needed.

A team of experts developed a work plan with a list of priorities, including hosting a practitioners' workshop in January 2020 and initiating the gathering and production of best management practices that do not compromise wetland values and services. The workshop resulted in an outline and work plan for a contemporary evaluation guide to be developed in 2020–2022.



**CANADIAN
WETLANDS
ROUNDTABLE**

About Leadership Reports
Français

The Canadian Wetlands Roundtable (CWR) is a multi-stakeholder partnership of conservation and resource organizations committed to advancing the sustainability, health and responsible management of Canada's wetlands through engagement, influence and action.



Our wetlands future is now.

Learn more.

Our Mission & Vision

The Canadian Wetlands Roundtable – A national partnership of conservation and resource sector organizations and wetland experts dedicated to enhancing the conservation and benefits of Canada's wetlands through their responsible management and sustainable use. Canada's wetlands are conserved for the benefit of all Canadians through integrated landscape and watershed management.

Project:
WEBSITE (\$20,000)

**CANADIAN WETLANDS ROUNDTABLE
RECOMMENDATION**

Project:
COORDINATION (\$35,000)

**CANADIAN WETLANDS ROUNDTABLE
RECOMMENDATION**

Generous funding from [Cabela's Canada Outdoor Fund](#) was used to develop the [Canadian Wetlands Roundtable](#) website. The website highlights the work of the Roundtable, including the goals, focus areas, values and our science-based partnership approach for bringing together some of the best Canadian industry and conservation minds to conserve these critical landscapes. It also stresses the importance of wetland stewardship to all Canadians—from outdoor recreationalists to landowners to urban residents.

In 2020–2021, a coordinator was contracted to manage and deliver Roundtable meetings, workshops and report production. Laying the groundwork for the revised guide, developing materials and convening calls with the inventory team were the main undertakings. The coordinator also worked closely with the Co-chairs to ensure good communication among subcommittees and the steering committee.

The Roundtable membership would like to acknowledge the important contributions of Greg Thompson of T&M Consulting for his role as 2019–2020 Canadian Wetland Roundtable Coordinator.



Balancing wetland conservation with other land uses, like agriculture, will help ensure a sustainable future. Together we can develop policies and best-management practices that create “win-win” solutions for business and for the landscape./©Ducks Unlimited Canada

ONGOING PROJECTS

NATIONAL WETLAND CONSERVATION FRAMEWORK

The state of wetlands in Canada

The objective of this project is to establish a comprehensive approach to science, policy and program objectives and standards for wetland protection, conservation and wise use across Canada, with emphasis on landscape-scale management. By providing an overview of the state of wetland management in Canada, the framework will identify current wetland needs and issues, and will serve as a key planning tool for setting future program priorities. The framework will bring together all of the planning, management and implementation elements of wetland conservation in Canada, including identifying high-priority areas and issues and the critical role of partnerships, like those with landowners, to undertake landscape-scale conservation across watersheds.

WETLANDS OFFSET POLICY REVIEW

“It would be ideal not to lose any wetlands in Canada but this isn’t realistic so we need to find the best ways to offset these wetland losses in ways that add value to the landscape and ecosystem.” *Pat Kehoe, Ducks Unlimited Canada*

Wetland loss and degradation continues across Canada, often despite stated policy and program objectives and regulation. The objective of this project is to review current policy effectiveness, including no-net-loss, and to improve wetland offsetting programs. With input from resource sectors and stakeholder practitioners, this project will propose practical solutions, supported by the resource and conservation sectors, to overcome well-documented difficulties with current wetland values/benefits and decision-making methodologies. For example, some provinces have policies for offsetting wetland loss and others don’t. The Roundtable aims to help facilitate, inform and ensure consistent policies and practices across the country.



With 90 per cent of prairie landscapes privately owned, partnerships with landowners are critical to wetland conservation. / ©Ducks Unlimited Canada

WETLANDS VALUE STATEMENT

In the 2003 *Wetland Stewardship in Canada* report, (Ken Cox et al) estimated the annual value of wetlands to Canadians at \$20B for the ecological goods and services they provide. Nearly two decades later, this estimate has not been updated to reflect current economic values. It is critical that we have a current estimate of the value of wetlands in Canada. Modernizing the current value statement remains an important and much-needed element in our engagement with governments, citizens and resource sectors. A 2020–2021 project will address refining this estimate based on up-to-date knowledge and methodologies. By working with economists and environmental non-governmental organizations, we intend to make this happen.

“As a significant feature in agriculture landscapes, wetlands play an important role in the health, productivity and sustainability of our food production.”
Frank Annau, Director of Environment and Science Policy, Canadian Federation of Agriculture

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2021 AND BEYOND

OUR WETLANDS FUTURE IS NOW

The momentum and success of this past year has laid a solid foundation for continuing our work and broadening our membership to include the participation of more resource sectors and other organizations. To achieve our goals, we must secure commitments and sufficient core resources to establish the Canadian Wetlands Roundtable on a permanent operating basis. The Wetlands Roundtable is committed to advancing the dialogue and science to create an incentive-based conservation approach on private lands. These efforts, coupled with progressive wetland policies and programs, would reward and benefit landowners for taking conservation action.

2019–2020 COMMITMENTS

OUR TOTAL BUDGET OF \$80,000 FOR 2019–2020 WAS GENEROUSLY PROVIDED BY THE FOLLOWING GROUPS:

Cabela's Outdoor Fund

Canadian Canola Growers Association

Canadian Sphagnum Peat Moss Association*

CropLife Canada

Ducks Unlimited Canada*

Forest Products Association of Canada*

Wildlife Habitat Canada

TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS: \$80,000

All partners contribute in-kind services through participation, guidance and actions.

*Multi-year commitment



Germantown Marsh, New Brunswick./©Ducks Unlimited Canada

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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CANADIAN WETLANDS ROUNDTABLE MEMBERS

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
B.C. Wildlife Federation
Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
Canadian Canola Growers Association
Canadian Cattlemen's Association
Canadian Federation of Agriculture
Canadian Remote Sensing Society
Canadian Sphagnum Peat Association
Canadian Wildlife Directors Standing Committee
(ex officio)
CropLife Canada
Ducks Unlimited Canada
Environment and Climate Change Canada
(ex officio)
Forest Products Association of Canada
University of Saskatchewan
Wildlife Habitat Canada

"I support the Canadian Wetlands Roundtables' view on the importance of conserving wetlands and the ecosystem services they provide to Canadians. I appreciate your taking the time to bring the Canadian Wetlands Roundtable's recommendations to my attention, and its valued partnership in advancing conservation work." *The Honorable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada*



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