



“As farmers we want to monitor our water because we need to be efficient to be sustainable and we can’t afford nutrient losses. Water feeds our crops, we need to conserve inputs. A healthy ecosystem supports beneficial insects and biodiversity which help us manage pest populations. Pulses enhance our soils, reduce fertilizer use and decrease carbon emissions/intensity or lower nitrous oxide emissions. Our agricultural bottom lines depend on using every resource as effectively as possible.”

Caroline Sekulic
APG Director
Rycroft (Zone 4)

CROP COMMISSIONS TEAM UP ON WATER STEWARDSHIP

Preventing impact to water resources from agricultural practices has long been a top priority for Alberta farmers. The issue has also been, at times, a lightning rod for public scrutiny.

The Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) is engaged in re-evaluating registered products, in part to better understand these products’ potential to impact water resources. Seven Alberta producer commissions are getting actively involved.

APG, along with the commissions representing barley, bees, canola, potatoes, sugar beets and wheat, have hired a consultant to lead a water monitoring program to help validate stewardship practices. Previous studies have mostly focused on rivers. With project design input from PMRA, this monitoring will involve private landowners and their wetlands. APG has identified chemistries that pulse growers consider mission critical. These will be evaluated as part of APG’s role in the program.

Resulting data will also help evaluate mitigation measures, such as 10-metre spray buffer zones, 3-metre grass buffers and 10-metre vegetative filter strips consisting of grass, shrubs and/or trees.

“This work will enable the advancement of farmers’ stewardship priorities,” said APG Policy & Program Specialist Nevin Rosaasen, “and serve the public interest in maintaining quality wetlands and water quality into the future.”

HOW ARE WETLANDS CLASSIFIED?

There are seven wetland classes in the Stuart-Kantrud classification system. Class III and IV have been identified as key in the water stewardship.

Class III - Seasonal Ponds and Lakes are characterized by shallow marsh vegetation, which generally occurs in the deepest zone (usually dry by midsummer). These wetlands are typically dominated by emergent wetland grasses, sedges and rushes.

Class IV - Semi-permanent Ponds and Lakes are characterized by marsh vegetation, which dominates the central zone of the wetland, as well as coarse emergent plants or submerged aquatics, including cattails, bulrushes and pondweeds. These wetlands frequently maintain surface water throughout the growing season, i.e., from May to September.

Source: www.wetlandpolicy.ca/stewart-kantrud-system