

Ecologically Sensitive Lands

Under the ALUS pilot project, landowners can enroll their ecologically sensitive lands and receive an annual payment based on their type of agricultural and environmental use.

Ecologically sensitive lands are areas that are currently cultivated (or have been cultivated in the last 20 years), but are at risk for severe water erosion, wind erosion, flooding, salinity, runoff or leaching. These must be classified under the Canada Land Inventory as Classes 4, 5, 6 or 7. To be eligible, perennial cover must be established, and land that is sown down in 2006 will be eligible for ALUS in 2007, provided it meets the minimum ground cover requirements. If land has been in perennial cover for more than 20 years, then it is eligible under natural area services.

Program participants can enroll up to 20% of their ecologically sensitive land. For example, if a landowner has 1,000 acres and 300 acres of the total is “ecologically sensitive”, then 20% of the 300 acres (60 acres) would be eligible.

Ecologically sensitive lands are eligible for the following payment rates:

\$25.00 per acre when the landowner signs an ALUS contract to keep the ecologically sensitive lands under perennial cover with no agricultural use, with no burning or breaking.

\$10.00 per acre when the landowner signs an ALUS contract to keep the ecologically sensitive lands under perennial cover, with no burning or breaking, but with haying permitted.

\$5.00 per acre when the landowner signs an ALUS contract to keep the ecologically sensitive lands under perennial cover, with grazing permitted after July 1 if off-site watering is available.

Landowners who have any questions about their eligibility or the criteria for ecologically sensitive lands should contact local ALUS representatives for more information.

Why Ecologically Sensitive Lands?

When sensitive lands are put into permanent cover (like clover, alfalfa, bluegrass or fescue), it nearly eliminates the risk of erosion, either by wind or water.

ALUS encourages farmers to keep these sections of permanent cover healthy, because it also helps to improve water quality by absorbing nutrients. At the same time, permanent cover serves as valuable wildlife habitat.