

## Project Info

"ALUS: An Ecological Goods & Services Research Project ~ Manitoba" is running for two years in the Rural Municipality of Blanshard, located northwest of Brandon, Manitoba. It is a voluntary, incentive-based environmental program that recognizes and rewards the positive contributions that rural landowners make to soil conservation, clean air and water and biodiversity through their land management practices.

This project is the first of its kind in Canada. In Manitoba, farmers and landowners will be paid to maintain and enhance four different landscape types that have public environmental benefits associated with them: wetlands, ecologically sensitive lands, riparian areas, and natural areas. Canadians value these areas, and on the ecological services that they produce – like wildlife habitat, cleaner water, and attractive rural landscapes – but there is a cost incurred by individual landowners to maintain these landscapes. The payments under the pilot project will help to offset some of these costs.

Payment levels will vary, depending on the type of ecological service provided. This includes \$5 per acre for managed grazing areas, \$15 per acre for natural areas, riparian areas and wetlands that are taken out of agricultural production, and \$25 per acre for certain ecologically sensitive lands. For more information on the program structure, contact the local ALUS program manager.

Early results suggest that, because of ALUS, more landowners will see their land in a new light, and begin to manage it in a way that will provide greater environmental benefits to us all.

Evaluation is very important to the future of programs like ALUS. The Manitoba project will be evaluated to learn more about participation levels, changes in landowner attitudes, efficiency of program delivery, and whether ALUS could be introduced as a national agri-environmental program.

### About the Location

The RM of Blanshard is home to 106 farms and 200 landowners. It was chosen to be the home of the first pilot project because its land is typical of much of agro-Manitoba, and its size is workable for evaluation.

The RM also had valuable baseline data about land use that will help in the evaluation of the project.

Most importantly, the local farming and conservation communities have embraced the ALUS project, as has the municipal council.