

Ducks Unlimited Canada – Prairie Region

Farm and Ranch PROGRAMS & INCENTIVES



Ducks Unlimited
Canada

ag.ducks.ca



Conserved land south of Elkhorn MB

Ducks Unlimited Canada can make your farm more profitable and sustainable, with programs that are science-backed and farm tested.

NAWCA Funded by the North American Wetlands Conservation Council (NAWCA), we restore and protect habitat that benefits waterfowl, wildlife and people. Those same wetlands and grasslands are critical for sustainable farming.

We collaborate with national and provincial groups to support conservation-minded land owners, their communities and ultimately, future generations. These are a few of our many partners:



When we share a vision for the land, everyone wins.

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1

DUC pays producers to seed grass and provides customized agronomic advice.

Increase options for livestock feed, build soil organic matter, improve water infiltration, add biodiversity and establish on-farm habitat for critical pollinators and wildlife.



Forage establishment near Shoal Lake MB

FORAGE

We helped prairie farmers establish over 150,000 acres of forage in the past five years. DUC also funds research into hay establishment, evaluating variables including seeding rates, use of cover crops and phosphate application.

Charlotte Crawley
DUC Prairie Forage Specialist

10-year term and agreement is pro-rated, allowing for early exit.

Contracts are not tied to land title.

30-acre minimum to qualify. No maximum.

Eligible on rented lands with landowner permission.

Alfalfa-only and/or alfalfa-timothy seedings are ineligible.

Rotation option after five years.

DUC can provide seeding advice and create custom forage blends specific to your field conditions.

Use Nutrien Proven Seed and receive a \$100/bag rebate.

Incentives may be available in your province to pay for Forage Establishment Insurance. Ask us!

Special recognition annually for the farmers with the top five best establishments of the year.

Establishing a perennial forage without a nurse crop will result in a better stand, leading to higher forage yields in Year 2 and beyond.

A 2024 study at the Parkland Crop Diversification Foundation (PCDF) compared planting straight forages versus establishment using a nurse crop. In the establishment year, straight forage treatments established well and competed with weeds. Although the oats grew well, plots underseeded to forages resulted in varying results for forage establishment, with the full rate of oats showing the poorest result for hay crops.

In Year 2, forages established with nurse crops were smaller, less vigorous and suffered higher weed populations which reduced forage yield. Forages without a nurse crop were well established with more biomass early in the season than plots established with oats.

Scan the code to read the full report or visit: ag.ducks.ca/program/grow-more-forage/.



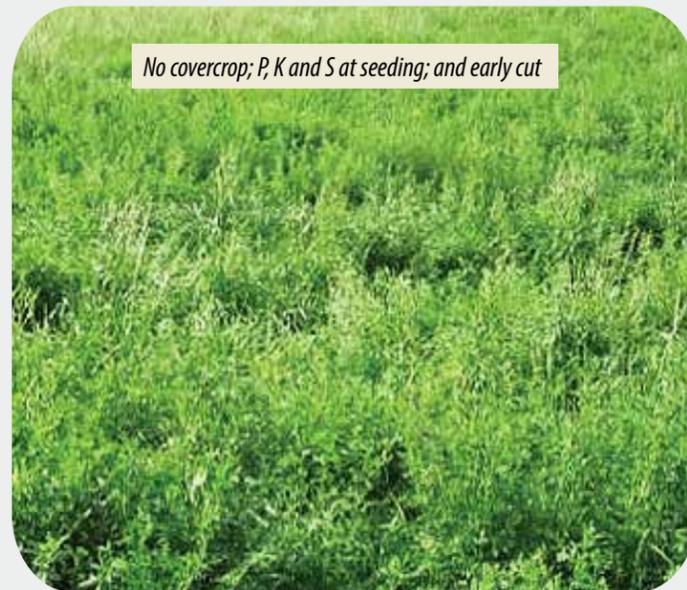
TIPS for establishing FORAGES

1 Seed early - get on the field as soon as possible after the risk of spring frost is over. Take advantage of cool, moist growing conditions. Summer heat and fewer rain events can bake newly emerging seedlings, resulting in plant death and a thinner stand. Ideal timing for most areas in the prairies is May long weekend.

2 Apply Phosphate (P) - 30 lbs/acre applied with the seed can increase seedling size by 4X compared to fields where no P is applied. Blend P directly with forage seed and seed as a mix. There are no bridging issues and the mix can be seeded with any air seeder through the fertilizer roller. Use best practices when applying near sensitive habitat.

3 Say no to companion crops - they compete with forage and can negatively impact establishment. If a companion crop is used, seed at NO MORE THAN 1/3 of a full seeding rate. With no cover crop, the stand is likely to emerge with weeds but this is easily managed through haying.

Same day on fields 15 kms from each other, showing regrowth in establishment year.



4 Seed heavy - a minimum of 12lbs/acre is recommended to protect against loss from excess heat, moisture or winterkill. If dormant seeding, broadcast seeding or using an excessive rate of cover crop, increase forage seeding rate by at least 30%. Healthy plant populations produce a more vigorous stand with greater longevity.

5 Seed shallow - forages should be seeded no deeper than 3/4". Do not attempt to chase moisture by planting deeper, even in dry conditions. Small seeds need to be close to the soil surface for seedlings to emerge. Seeding deeper reduces plant counts in new establishments.

6 Use an air seeder/seed drill if possible - broadcast seeding is convenient but seeding depth varies and success depends largely on adequate rainfall. Seed near the surface faces hotter conditions which can prevent establishment. A seed drill optimizes seed-to-soil contact and ensures the crop is planted at a uniform depth.

7 Seed multiple species to ensure at least one type of plant grows in all areas under varying conditions. Certified seed ensures good germination and minimal weed seeds. Some seed companies also offer establishment guarantees for their product. Ask your retailer for details.

8 Seed coating - some seed companies coat their forage seed to help it flow more easily through air seeders. This coating can add significant weight to the seed, which means a 50 lb bag does not contain 50 lbs of seed. Adjust seeding rates to accommodate and seed heavy if using coated seed.

9 Limit competition - preseeding weed control is essential to clean the field for optimal establishment. Ensure that chemicals will not leave residual effects on the species being planted. Cut the field early in the establishment year to prevent weeds from setting seed and to reduce competition with the forage planting.

10 Remove the crop as silage - swaths can hinder seedling growth and - in extreme cases - kill all the plants underneath, leaving blank or thin strips. Best practice in the establishment year is to chop or round bale silage to prevent swaths from laying in the field for extended periods.

11 Cutting precautions - do not cut below 4"-6" to ensure plant residual regrows before freeze-up. Do not take a second cut in the establishment year. Cutting alfalfa five to six weeks before killing frost depletes root reserves, stresses new seedlings and may thin the crop and decrease stand longevity.

12 Do not graze in the year of establishment - although the stand may look thick and lush, the root systems are still developing and may not be fully anchoring the plant into the soil. Grazing animals can pull out the entire plant, causing stand thinning and decreased longevity.

13 Insure your crop - Forage Establishment Insurance is available in the prairie provinces through Manitoba Agricultural Services Corporation (MASC), Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation (SCIC) and the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC).

MARGINAL ACRES

Marginal areas near Rapid City MB

Target marginal areas within annually cropped fields.

10-year term agreement with a prorated buyout option. Contracts are not tied to land title.

Spring and dormant seeding are eligible.

Touch-up seeding is permitted at any time during the 10-year term.

Grazing, haying and mowing are permitted.

Seed can be sourced through DUC or a retailer of the producer's choice. If DUC-sourced, costs are deducted from the per-acre payment.

FCC top up is available for eligible customers.



2

Seed underperforming crop areas to grass and improve your bottom line.

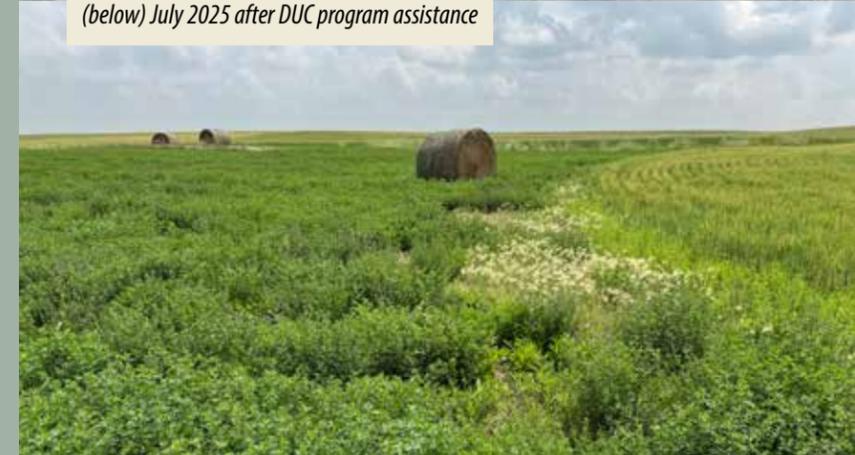
Reduce input costs, improve returns in saline areas and outcompete kochia and foxtail barley.

Low-yielding acres really don't pay. Prairie farmers lose about \$68 per acre on average when trying to grow annual crops in these areas. But using perennial forages can turn those underperforming acres into productive land while reducing weed pressure and input costs.

*Jenai Buchanan
DUC Marginal Areas Specialist*



Marginal field near Melita MB in Aug 2022 and (below) July 2025 after DUC program assistance



A new study shows 20 percent of cropland in western Canada is unprofitable in a given year and nearly half those acres are unprofitable in the very same spot year-after-year.

▶ Planting perennial forages in those marginal acres can result in a net profit while effectively managing kochia and mitigating saline issues. *Scan the code to read the full report or go to ag.ducks.ca/program/marginal-areas-mb/.*



FCC/PepsiCo Support



Working with DUC, FCC offers financial incentives to eligible FCC customers participating in DUC's Marginal Areas Program.

Incentive payments are calculated based on the lesser of:

- a portion of your lending with FCC to a maximum of \$4,000 per year, OR
- \$100 per acre registered in the DUC's Marginal Areas Program.

You can reapply annually throughout the life of the program.

PepsiCo, a global leader in food and beverages, also supports eligible producers.

The incentive will equal up to 50% of the incentive producers already receive from FCC, to a maximum of \$2,000 per eligible application.

To learn more or apply for the incentives, visit <https://www.fcc-fac.ca/en/financing/agriculture/sustainability-incentive-program/ducks-unlimited-canada-duc>

Establishing FORAGES in MARGINAL AREAS

In addition to the *Tips for Establishing Forages* found on page 4, the following recommendations have been scientifically proven and field-tested to improve forage establishment in weedy, saline or otherwise marginal production land.

Dormant seeding - saline areas are often near sloughs with saturated soils and spring seeding in excess moisture can cause compaction which may prevent seedlings from emerging. Dormant seeding is an option but wait until the soil temperatures are below five degrees C (generally around Halloween).

1

Chemical weed control - without an option to control in-crop weeds, forage blends with both grasses and legumes require pre-seed weed control. Ensure the control chemicals have no residual effects on forage seedlings. Expect weed pressure for the first few years in saline plantings, even with weed control.

2

Mechanical weed control - mowing kochia before it sets seed removes 80% of the seed bank for the next crop season. Foxtail barley doesn't like competition or mowing so keep the ground covered with grass and mow before weeds set seed, possibly multiple times in the first two seasons.

3

Don't be too conservative - often, suboptimal crop yields extend a drill width or two past the bare patch. A best practice is to seed an extra pass or two where some stubble is still present, improving the chances of a successful forage establishment.

4

Touch up seeding - minimal disturbance is important as forages are establishing. Use a disc drill, scratch in with an air seeder or broadcast/harrow over top of existing forage. Once plants are established, they will draw down the water table and pull the salts with it, improving salinity.

5

Be patient - it may take two to three years before saline-tolerant plants establish and fill in blank areas. Creeping rooted plants should fill these areas over time if soil is left undisturbed but touch up seeding may be required, especially in areas with no vegetation growing and with white surface salts.

6

Leave the forage intact - don't take the forage out of production at the first sign of soil improvement. Salinity may reduce within a few years of forages establishing but expect the problem to return if forages are removed.

7



Dormant seeding marginal land near Rapid City MB by drone

3

Diversify your crop rotation with high-yielding, disease-resistant winter wheat.

Reduce spring workload. Harvest early. Increase profitability. Manage herbicide resistance and reduce soil erosion. Increase effectiveness of crop protection products.



Winter wheat field near Melita MB

WINTER WHEAT

Winter wheat is the most profitable cereal crop for many farmers in our program. Growers have seen yields above 85 bushels per acre. Combined with strong prices, winter wheat is their number one cash crop.

Alex Griffiths
DUC Winter Cereals Specialist



DUC pays you \$20/acre to a maximum of \$5,000.

Receive expert agronomic support from DUC's winter wheat specialists.

50-acre minimum to qualify.

Keep incentives even if the field winterkills - as long as you try the crop again in the future.



Winter wheat has been identified as a practical tool against kochia, especially important as the weed in western Canada is highly resistant to a growing number of herbicides.

A multi-year study by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada involving collaborators in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba found that diversifying the crops in rotation on a given field disrupts kochia's foothold. Researchers reported a decrease in kochia biomass in Year 3 by 64% and density by 74% after changing spring wheat for winter wheat.

Scan the code to read the full report from Dr. Charles Geddes or go to ag.ducks.ca/program/winter-wheat-mb/.



SOD SEEDING

4



DUC sod seeding a forage stand near Binscarth MB

Rejuvenate pastures with DUC's sod seeding.

Prevent tillage of grasslands while improving plant diversity, optimizing pollinator habitat and increasing livestock feed quality in poorly producing pasturelands.

10-year term. Agreement is pro-rated, allowing for early exit.

Nothing is tied to land title and no carbon credits are claimed under the agreement.

30-acre minimum to qualify.

Eligible on pasture acres, including rented land (with landowner permission).

Not eligible for broadcast seeding establishments.

DUC agrologists will assist with seed mix formulation, seeding rates and equipment specifics to ensure successful establishments.

A grazing management plan is included, with advice on pasture productivity.

DUC has successfully established 1,400 acres of sod seeding in Manitoba.

Scan the code to read about the science behind sod seeding or visit ag.ducks.ca/program/sod-seeding/.



SOD SEEDING Tips



1 Pre-Seeding Management – manage the cover by grazing, haying or mowing the field the year prior or early spring. Clearing plant matter is essential to ensure good seed to soil contact and increase plant competitiveness.

2 Seed Mix – seed multiple species of legumes to ensure one type of plant grows in all areas of the field under varying conditions. Seeding a grass into a grass stand will have a low success rate.

3 Seed early - get on the field as soon as possible after the risk of spring frost is over. Take advantage of cool, moist growing conditions. Summer heat and fewer rain events can bake newly emerging seedlings, resulting in plant death and a thinner stand. Ideal timing for most areas is May long weekend.

4 Use a No-Till Drill – broadcasting and grazing is convenient but does not guarantee good seed to soil contact. A disc drill will cut through the sod bound soil and provide good seed to soil contact and accurate seeding rate. ½ inch seed depth is ideal.

5 Seed Rate – a minimum of 10lbs/acre is recommended to protect against loss from excess heat, moisture and winterkill.

6 Patience – it is common to not see changes in the stand with the first year. In some cases, it can take up 2-3 years to see the legumes express themselves in the stand. Do not over graze the field in first few years of seeding, as it can risk uprooting the new forage seedlings.

Sod seeding can rejuvenate yields by almost 800 percent! To increase your chances of success, monitor through the spring to determine if a quick graze is needed to keep the grass from choking out the young legumes.

*Cam Ross
DUC Sod Seeding Specialist*

Increased Hay Yields from Sod Seeding

Research from Manitoba Agriculture

	Sod Seeded		Native Hay Check	
Year	lb/acre	kg/hectare	lb/acre	kg/hectare
seed down year	522	585	432	484
Year 2	1,654	1,854	480	538
Year 3	3,760	4,215	600	672
Year 4	4,940	5,538	625	700

RANGEFLEX

5



Increase profitability and biodiversity in your cattle operation by enhancing the grass and water in your pastures.

New in 2026, RangeFlex provides incentives, grazing plans, maps and on-farm support.

Improve pasturelands to make your operation more sustainable.

Receive:

- financial incentives;
- grazing plan;
- farm map; and
- on-site support.

Scan the QR code to be the first to receive program information when available in Spring 2026.



GRAZING 101 - Best management practices

DUC agrologists are trained in grassland production and management systems. Contact us with any questions about grazing implementation.



1

Pasture management principles

- a. **Spring grazing** - allow plants to reach the 3 to 4 leaf stage prior to grazing, to replenish root reserves used during spring growth.
- b. **Take 50%, leave 50%** - a plant grazed down to the soil has minimal ability to photosynthesize new growth. Leave 6 inches of standing material after grazing for more rapid recovery and the potential for a second grazing pass.
- c. **Faster rotation, faster regrowth** - overgrazing happens when the same plant is grazed more than once before cattle are moved out of a paddock, typically when animals remain longer than five days. Increase pasture production by faster rotation, giving plants time to recover. Grazing managers should ensure cattle are back-fenced out of previously-grazed areas to prevent 'second bites' prior to plant regrowth.
- d. **Recovery time** - clipped plants require time to replenish root reserves and optimize regrowth. Depending on the soil, plant species and overall condition, a range of 60 -120 days is average. Plants that are adequately rested are more productive, resilient and healthier, resulting in greater forage production for grazing livestock.

2

Ground cover is critical for healthy pastures. Ground cover conserves soil moisture, protects from temperature extremes and helps prevent weed seeds from establishing. With high stock density grazing, animal hooves naturally push forage material down to the soil surface which armours the soil and - over time - rebuilds soil nutrients. Small paddocks grazed with high intensity for a short duration, then provided adequate recovery, will show improved grassland productivity. In small paddocks, animals are also more evenly distributed which means better, more uniform forage utilization.

3

Legumes can revitalize older forage stands. Legumes improve feed quality by adding diversity, producing nitrogen and providing food for pollinating insects. Legumes can be successfully sod-seeded into an existing stand using sound agronomy and appropriate grazing management. Use short duration grazing intervals and leave behind a minimum of 6 inches of plant material. It can take up to three years to see results even with optimal management.

4

Water can be a limiting resource. Clean, fresh water for grazing cattle directly impacts daily gains. Strategically placed water sources optimize range utilization and grazing distribution by allowing more options for pasture rotations. Installing water systems can also improve riparian health.

5

Be patient. It may take five years before changes are evident after implementing new pasture management. Stick to the plan and regularly assess your grazing lands to see improvements. Reference photos and grazing notebooks can be useful in comparing successes year after year.

6

For over 25 years, DUC grazing clubs have brought Manitoba livestock producers together to share ways to increase both profitability and sustainability in their operations.

Visits to local farms provide a first-hand look at how neighbours have increased their profits and sustainability through innovation.



GRAZING CLUBS

Farmers want farmers to be successful. So they're willing to open up their farms and share, even when things aren't exactly perfect. Sometimes it's best to see the things that didn't work to help guys not make that same mistake.

*Mike Thiele
DUC Grazing Clubs Coordinator*



*Grazing Club tour showcasing
swath grazing*

Introduced by DUC in 1999, Grazing Clubs utilize a farmer-teaching-farmer approach on topics including soil health, covercrops, financial planning and grazing management.

On-farm tours showcase innovative practices specific to Manitoba conditions.

No membership fee and new members are always welcome.

Contact the Grazing Clubs coordinator directly at mthiele@mymts.net to find out about upcoming events.

See past presentations online at: www.youtube.com/channel/UCLthJYUxgXX-aegQ9J_TnbeA.

Mentors are available to provide one-on-one advice. Contact information@mbfi.ca for details.

7

Memories are made on your farm. With family and friends. Protect those memories forever by protecting your land.

A Conservation Easement preserves natural areas including pastureland and wetlands, to ensure your farm legacy remains unchanged for future generations.



Conservation area on farm near Erickson MB

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Everyone has their own reason for conserving land but there's one I hear a lot. People want to keep their land as it is now. Preserve its natural state and protect it for the next generations. They're thinking about the future and a conservation agreement fits.

*Lena Vanden Elsen
DUC Conservation Programs Specialist*

You maintain ownership of the land, and we allow work on the property for land improvements such as fencing, dugouts and harvesting firewood.

You receive a one-time payment based on appraised land value.

Easements can be combined with wetland and upland restoration programs.

Habitat is protected in perpetuity. You choose what to include:

- Protect wetlands from being filled or drained.
- Grasslands can be hayed or grazed with no restrictions but not broken or cultivated.
- Rejuvenate tame grasslands at 10-year intervals to maintain productivity.

Draining wetlands lowers the water table, which can cause reduced levels in dugouts and less sub-surface soil moisture reaching crops. If you leave the water table intact, soil water moves upward during the winter, increasing availability for crop production.

Wetlands can cool the air temperature by up to three degrees Celsius in summer. This helps crops prone to heat stress, including canola.

Pollinators and insects found in wetlands can destroy common pests in croplands - flea beetles in canola, for example. A diverse farmscape can suppress destructive pests, reduce the need for pesticides and increase returns.

Grasslands are biodiverse, with two hectares (five acres) typically containing 100 plant species that shelter and feed the creatures that make up a healthy ecosystem. Deep roots protect soil from erosion and store carbon to mitigate climate change.

WETLAND RESTORATIONS

8



Improve farm production by restoring drained wetlands. Those sloughs and potholes optimize crop production by regulating the water table, reducing nitrogen and phosphorus run-off from fields and helping to maintain water levels in dugouts.

*Jane Haglund-Scott
DUC Wetland Restoration Specialist*

Researchers found wetland basins drained for crop production return an average of \$55/acre, compared to \$203/acre average profit for non-wetland areas.

Restoring drained wetlands can also reduce nitrogen and phosphorus running off farm fields, saving farmers on input costs. One Manitoba watershed (Broughton's Creek) experienced a 30 percent increase in nutrient loading over 40 years due to wetland loss.

And, wetlands ease flooding by holding water. When wetlands are drained, precipitation and water from melting snowpacks run directly into creeks and rivers. This makes water levels even higher in flood years, with increased erosion and property damage.

We restore drained or altered wetlands on your land using a small earthen plug.

You retain ownership.

DUC covers all project-related costs including surveying and construction.

Haying and grazing are permitted.

Your payment is based on a 10-year agreement.

Contact DUC for details and incentives available in your area.



Hay tender property near Binscarth MB

Selling land to DUC guarantees that property's natural features will be restored and preserved in perpetuity. You get fair market value for the land AND satisfaction in knowing that critical wildlife habitat will be protected for future generations.

Scott Henowitch
DUC Land Sales Specialist

Looking for land? Or, thinking of selling?

Each year, DUC buys thousands of acres to conserve the natural habitat before selling the land back to local producers.

Thousands more acres are available for grazing and haying by annual tenders.



LAND OPTIONS

Revolving Land Conservation Program

How does it work? DUC:

- purchases land at fair market value;
- restores the wetlands and grasslands;
- places a conservation agreement on the title; and
- sells the land back to farmers.

Arable acres are rented during the restoration phase, keeping the land in production and weed-free.

Funds from sales are used to buy more land to restore.



New fencing installed on DUC property prior to sale near Cardale MB

Hay Tenders

Property lists and bid forms are available in May each year, online at ag.ducks.ca and ducks.ca.

Watch for information cards at your local post office or notices in community newspapers. Haying can begin after July 15.

Grazing Tenders

DUC works with cattle producers on intensive rotational grazing and have been growing our rentable acres. Ask about opportunities on DUC land in your area.

So, you've signed an agreement with DUC...

Welcome to the family! We've been partnering with folks like you since 1938, providing programs and incentives that make farms more profitable and more sustainable.

Here are answers to common questions you may have.

WORKING with DUC



DUC visits hundreds of farms every year to provide the best agronomy

DUGOUTS

You can build a dugout on conserved land but not inside a wetland. A work consent is required. Contact us and we'll assist as you decide on best locations and dugout designs.

FENCING

A work consent may be required if your new fence will disturb the soil. Contact DUC about any fencing projects.

HAYING

Grasslands can be hayed or grazed with no restrictions, but not broken or cultivated. You can rejuvenate tame grasslands every 10 years to maintain productivity. We can help.

ACCESS and FIELD CROSSINGS

You don't want cattle stuck in wetlands and we don't either. Let's talk about the best ways for you and your livestock to access and utilize conserved lands. A work consent is required.

FIREWOOD

The collection of firewood is permitted on conserved lands. We recommend that you limit the use of heavy machinery.

HUNTING

You can hunt on your conserved land and, if you choose, allow others the same privilege. Throughout our history, DUC has enjoyed strong support from the hunting community.

BEAVER PROBLEMS

Although they are part of a healthy ecosystem, beavers can cause flooding on adjacent land when building their dams and lodges. DUC can provide solutions.

LAND RENTAL

You can rent out conserved land for agricultural use. We recommend giving your renter a map showing which areas are restricted, and we're happy to provide that to you.

OIL

Exploration, drilling and oil extraction are allowed. You keep all lease payments because you own the land, while DUC works with oil companies to minimize disturbance to habitat.

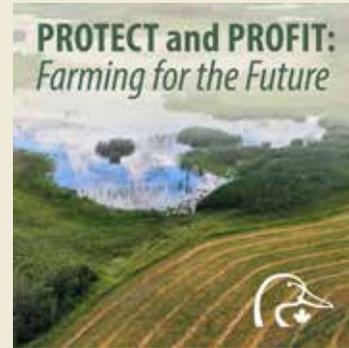
LAND DONATIONS

Each year, conservation-minded people donate land to DUC to protect and preserve those acres, forever. If you are interested in a land legacy, please contact us.

Podcast

Each month, we feature landowners, scientists and conservation specialists on our podcast.

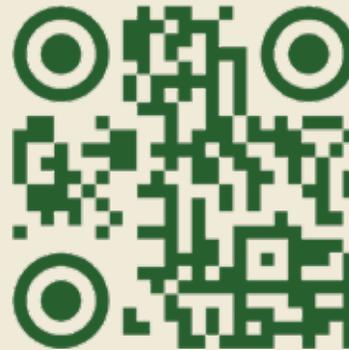
Hear episodes at ag.ducks.ca or wherever you find your podcasts.



Website

Go to ag.ducks.ca and find details on all the programs and incentives offered by DUC in every province.

Use this handy QR code to access the website from your mobile device or log on ag.ducks.ca/programs/manitoba/.



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