

With the current round of advertizing going on with Ducks Unlimited and their critique of drainage we finally have an opportunity to discuss publicly the elephant in the room. Uncontrolled drainage without any limits or boundaries is just as dangerous to the public as unlimited weight restrictions on our highways. Limits are required to provide order and checks in a system that can only handle so much chaos. We are advocating a water management policy in this province that includes input from all stakeholders to ensure that any significant damage is mitigated before major weather events occur.

Conservancy groups such as Ducks Unlimited, Nature Conservancy, and Sierra Club et al. need to face basic facts. Agriculture is not going to step back to the 50's and carry on meaningful production using archaic principles and processes. I do not foresee any member of these groups wanting to revert back to the old pen and paper and the party line phone system. Therefore why are they demanding that agriculture needs to revert back to the way water and ecosystems were at that time? Economically agriculture is a key pillar of the economic platform of the Sask economy. Saskatchewan retains 40% of Canadian arable land and employees 13% of the Saskatchewan work force. In 2013 agriculture in Saskatchewan provided \$11.8 Billion in farm cash receipts and \$11.7 Billion in Agri-food exports. In order to continue to provide these types of production numbers more efficiency will need to be developed within the Sask agriculture landscape. Drainage is an integral part of creating those efficiencies. Agriculture producers are not advocating draining every pothole and water body within the production belt but want to work with a system that allows them to farm the best and leave the rest. Members of our association currently have over 16% of the lands they manage in habitat and wetlands. This varies according to the medium term environmental conditions. Wet conditions of the last decade have reduced the productive capability of the land potentially creating medium term or even irreparable damage due to increased soil salinity, nutrient leaching and acreage loss due to long term water accumulation.

Ducks Unlimited and other conservancy groups also need to have boundaries and limits placed on their activities. Using Google search "overpopulation of geese" reveals that an overabundance of waterfowl has resulted in permanent damage to the arctic tundra as quoted in a US Geological Survey "*As the best areas are overgrazed and destroyed, geese move on to graze new areas that are less productive and more prone to destruction. Once the plants are gone, evaporation of soil moisture leads to salinization (salt build-up) of the soil. In some areas, scientists have documented soil salt levels that are 10 times that of seawater. In these areas even the stunted arctic growing willows are killed by the salt and virtually no plants - at least none usable by wildlife - grow.*"

This is one example of what can happen when conservancy issues without limits or controls can adversely affect our environment. In Saskatchewan, Ducks Unlimited has now secured 1,858,210ac and influence a cumulative total of 2,608,502 ac. Not all of that acreage has been managed in a manner that has them recognized as responsible neighbors.

Sask Farm Stewardship Association is a group of Saskatchewan producers that want to ensure there is a meaningful dialogue among all stakeholders whether urban, rural, environmentalist or conservationists that ensures there is a long term water management strategy that benefits all residents.

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