

Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership

Competitive. Innovative. Resilient.

Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) Program GUIDELINES



Canada

1.1 ALTERNATIVE LAND USE SERVICES (ALUS) PROGRAM

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The **Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS)** Program aims to empower farmers and farmland owners in conservation and regeneration of agricultural landscapes.

ALUS supports the maintenance, enhancement, and production of ecological goods and services (EG&S) to reduce soil erosion, improve air and water quality, enhance wildlife habitat and biodiversity, sequester carbon and build resilient agricultural landscapes.

ALUS provides financial assistance to farmers and farmland owners through a multi-year land use agreement. The agreement provides annual payments for the adoption and maintenance of beneficial management practices (BMPs) on agricultural land and for the conversion of targeted environmentally sensitive land from annual crop production to biodiverse, carbon sequestering perennial landscapes.

The delivery of ALUS is a joint effort of two provincial government departments: The Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action. Guidance for ALUS activities will be provided by the ALUS Partnership Advisory Committee comprised of members from industry, conservation and watershed groups.

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PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Eligible Recipients

- Mi'kmaq First Nations and other Indigenous groups;
- Landowners leasing active agricultural land to an agricultural producer (further documentation may be requested); and
- Agricultural producers

Eligible Activities/Expenses

Eligible activities are detailed in **Appendix A**, and include:

- Converting marginal or high-risk croplands that have been in annual production at some point since 2015 into biodiverse, perennial, carbon-sequestering landscapes. Eligible lands include:
 - Expansion of buffer zones beyond the regulated 15m;
 - Seasonally wet annual cropland;
 - High slope cropland; and
 - Field margins.
- Maintaining land under soil conservation structures, or natural hollows left as permanent grass;
- Excluding livestock from watercourses and wetlands;
- Establishing and maintaining habitat and nectar sources for pollinators and other beneficial insects;
- Planting trees & shrubs on ALUS-retired lands;
- Delaying cutting and harvesting of grass in forage fields, and deferring grazing of forages in pastures, until after July 15th of each year;
- Establishing and maintaining innovative agroforestry systems; and
- Avoiding conversion and enhancing management of previously enrolled ALUS features.

Ineligible Activities/Expenses

- Activities which are a requirement under regulation (i.e. 15m riparian buffer zones and regulated grassed headlands);
- Research;
- Academic institution overhead fees;
- BRM-type activities;
- Normal and on-going operating and maintenance activities;
- Activities that do not provide a direct benefit to the Sector;
- Activities related to aquaponic food production, or to aquaculture, seaweed, fish and seafood production and processing (except international marketing and traceability activities for fish and seafood);
- Activities which provide tax credits or rebates; and
- Development and enforcement of regulations.

Funding

- Level of funding varies by BMP, as detailed in **Appendix A: Eligible ALUS Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs)**.



PAYMENT PROCESS

- Recipients will receive an annual payment based on ALUS features enrolled in a multi-year land use agreement.



TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Recipients must meet the eligibility criteria and submit a complete application to the Department of Agriculture;
- New ALUS applications will be assessed on a **first come-first serve basis**;
- If the project is not approved, all incurred costs are the responsibility of the applicant;
- To enroll land and receive the payment rate as listed in Appendix A:
 - **Harvestable Forage:** Eligible land must be retired from annual crop production, seeded to perennial forages, and either grazed or used to make stored forage.
 - **Managed for Biodiversity:** Eligible land must be retired from crop production to establish habitat for wildlife, pollinators and other beneficial insects. Land must not be harvested for forage, nor used as a headland. Land must either be allowed to return to a natural state or is seeded to a pollinator mix when converted from annual production.
 - **Trees and Shrubs:** Eligible land must be retired from crop production to establish habitat and planted to a mix of shrubs and trees. Previously retired ALUS features that were allowed to return to a natural state may already be growing in trees and shrubs and are eligible for the additional incentive.
- Agricultural producers applying for an ALUS feature on leased land require a form signed by the farmland owner acknowledging that the producer can receive the annual payment for the term of the agreement;
- All projects are subject to verification of application information or project completion through site visits by ALUS Advisors, or verification through aerial or satellite imagery;
- Producers must notify the ALUS Advisor of heightened biosecurity requirements prior to site visits; and
- Areas eligible for payment may be prioritized by the Department of Agriculture.



PUBLIC TRUST

Projects approved for funding under the Sustainable CAP which have demonstrable links to increasing public trust may be eligible for additional project funding.



EVALUATION AND CONTROL

A complete evaluation of this program is planned to ensure that the objectives and results are achieved and to assess the relevance of its renewal. Program metrics are collected and reported on an on-going basis.



GUIDING PRINCIPLE

Sustainable CAP programs are available to all Canadians who are eligible to participate in those programs. Wherever possible, the needs of under-represented groups, including Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, and persons with disabilities, were considered during program development.

HOW TO APPLY

Completed applications may be submitted to the attention of the Program Officer via regular mail or email.

Email Applications:

Applications may be submitted via email to

ALUS@gov.pe.ca

Please include the program name in the subject line.

Regular Mail Applications:

Applications may be submitted via regular mail at:

PEI Department of Agriculture

11 Kent Street

PO Box 2000

Charlottetown PE C1A 7N8

(902) 368-4880 (telephone)

Appendix A: Eligible ALUS Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs)

Eligible Lands and Primary Purpose	Options	Financial Assistance	Project Requirements and Notes
Expanded Buffer Zones <i>Protect watercourses and wetlands and increase biodiversity</i>	Harvestable forage	\$250/hectare/year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas must have been in annual crop production (cereals, oilseed, or row crop) at some point since 2015 or already enrolled in ALUS for the 2022 season. • The regulated 15m buffer zone is not eligible.
	Managed for biodiversity	\$275/hectare/year	
	Trees & shrubs	\$300/hectare/year	
Seasonally Wet Cropland <i>Reduce nitrate leaching and nitrous oxide emissions; retire a nuisance area of field</i>	Harvestable forage	\$200/hectare/year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas under the Seasonally Wet Cropland BMP must be seasonally inundated soils in low lying areas of fields. • High sloped land is identified in red in the PEI Sloped Land Inventory (PEISLI) GIS layer, representing a contiguous area greater than 1 hectare and where slope is 9% or greater.
	Managed for biodiversity	\$225/hectare/year	
	Trees & shrubs	\$250/hectare/year	
High Slope Cropland <i>Reduce soil erosion</i>	Harvestable forage	\$200/hectare/year	
	Managed for biodiversity	\$225/hectare/year	
	Trees & shrubs	\$250/hectare/year	
Field Margins <i>Wildlife habitat, increase biodiversity, square up fields for efficiency</i>	Managed for biodiversity	\$225/hectare/year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both annual and perennial cropland are eligible for field margin enhancement.
	Trees & shrubs	\$250/hectare/year	
Land under Soil Conservation Structures <i>Reduce soil erosion</i>	Diversion terraces	\$300/hectare/year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas must have been in annual crop production (cereals, oilseed, or row crop) at some point since 2015 or already enrolled in ALUS for the 2022 season. • Soil conservation structures must meet minimum standards as determined by Soil Conservation Specialists with the Department of Agriculture and be in locations within the field deemed effective in preventing soil erosion. • Natural hollows must be a minimum of 30' wide.
	Farmable berms		
	Grassed waterways		
	Natural hollows		
Watercourses and Wetlands Livestock Exclusion <i>Protect water quality</i>	Maintain livestock fencing	\$0.30/metre/year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field must have the necessary watering infrastructure, stream crossings and be actively used for grazing. Fencing must be installed a minimum of 5m from the edge of an adjacent watercourse or wetland.
Delayed Hay Cutting and Deferred Grazing of long-term forage fields <i>Support population recovery for bobolinks and other ground-nesting birds</i>	Cut or graze after July 15 th	\$62/hectare/year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To continue to receive funding, annual independent field audits need to confirm the presence of nesting bobolinks.
Establish and Develop Innovative Agroforestry Systems <i>Improve economic, environmental, and social outcomes on farm</i>	Eco-buffers, alternative shelterbelts, willow blocks, etc.	\$250/hectare/year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agroforestry establishment costs are supported through the Agriculture Stewardship Program. • Land eligible for eco-buffers may be prioritized to target larger fields. • Tree density for silvopasture is a minimum of 200 trees/hectare.
	Silvopasture (planting trees on pasture)	\$150/hectare/year	