



## TERMS OF REFERENCE TERRESTRIAL SUB-GROUP (TSG)

Updated by TSG: March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010  
Approved by RWG: March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010

### **PURPOSE:**

The TSG is a sub-group of the Reclamation Working Group (RWG). The TSG will provide guidance and produce tools that facilitate the establishment of sustainable terrestrial ecosystems on the reclaimed landscape within the Athabasca oil sands region.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

To develop recommendations that support establishment, assessment, monitoring, criteria & indicators for certification, and adaptive management of reclaimed terrestrial ecosystems on oil sands leases in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.

This will be accomplished through the development and maintenance of the following guidance documents and decision support tools:

- a guidance document and tool that facilitates the evaluation of land capabilities for forest ecosystems on natural and reclaimed lands;
- a guidance document for forest vegetation (ecosystems) establishment;
- a guidance document for management practices for soil salvage and placement; and
- other reclamation guidance documents and tools as agreed upon by the RWG.

These guidance documents will support the creation of a range of sustainable terrestrial ecosystems in reclaimed landscapes. The TSG will provide these guidance documents and tools as recommendations to the RWG.

### **OPERATING GUIDELINES**

The TSG will operate in a manner that is consistent with the principles, rules, policies, and procedures adopted by CEMA. The TSG will follow CEMA's policies and guidelines.

### **The TSG will:**

- oversee, coordinate, and integrate the work of task groups that focus on the development of guidance documents for specific aspects of reclamation and closure as they relate to terrestrial ecosystems;
- develop a greater understanding of all resource development operations, reclamation technologies and government regulations and policy as they relate to terrestrial ecosystems;
- contribute to proactive and progressive integration of closure and reclamation planning across all industrial developments and within the regional context;
- make recommendations to RWG on regional reclamation planning and management, regulation and policy (including reclamation certification) as they relate to terrestrial ecosystems;
- identify additional reclamation research to address knowledge gaps for guidance documents as they relate to terrestrial ecosystems, and facilitate participation by members in this research. This may result in the formation of task groups and recommending research related to reclamation;
- facilitate/conduct the technology synthesis and transfer of research relating to guidance manuals developed by the TSG;
- develop monitoring protocols (and implement where appropriate), analytical techniques, assessment models, and remedial measures related to the TSG guidance documents; and
- conduct other activities as agreed to by the TSG and RWG members.

The TSG will consider the need to formally interface with other CEMA working groups and, through RWG, other related groups.



Chairpersons are nominated by the membership and are selected by consensus by the TSG. The term for a chairperson is two years. The TSG will strive to have two chairpersons at a time, with overlapping terms to ensure effective transition. The TSG will also strive to have one chairperson from industry and one chairperson from Government/First Nations/NGO at any given time.

**REPORT TO RWG:**

Key TSG deliverables to be submitted to the RWG are listed in Table 1. The TSG will be prepared to provide a progress report at each RWG meeting. This Terms of Reference will be reviewed and updated every two years. This will allow for a review and confirmation of the TSG purpose and objectives by RWG Members.

**Table 1: Key TSG deliverables and their timelines**

<b>Deliverable</b>	<b>Deliverable completion timeline</b>
Guideline for Reclamation to Forest Vegetation in the Athabasca Oil Sands Region	Reviewed every five years and updated as necessary. Versions include: 1998, 2009. Next review expected Q4 2014.
Land Capability Classification System for Forest Ecosystems in the Oil Sands	Reviewed every five years and updated as necessary. Next revision expected Q4 2013
Management Practices for Soil Salvage and Placement	Reviewed and updated as necessary. First version expected in 2010.
Annual Report	Q2 every year
Annual Strategic Planning Meeting	Q1 every year

**MEMBERSHIP:**

Any member of CEMA is eligible to join the TSG. The TSG will seek to maintain broad stakeholder representation. Details of membership responsibilities and chair rotation can be found in CEMA's policies and procedures.

A TSG member is expected to:

- be able to attend and participate on a regular, consistent basis;
- be fully informed and up to date about the subjects to be discussed at meetings;
- contribute to meetings; and
- accept and abide by CEMA's policies and guidelines.



## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE TERRESTRIAL SUBGROUP**

The Soils Working Group was assembled in 1995 and consisted of representatives from industry, government and research providers. The group was tasked to address the issue of reconstructed landscape and soil properties important in returning land capability, and as a result of their efforts the manual “Land Capability Classification System for Forest Ecosystems in the Oil Sands Region” (LCCS) was published in 1996. Following its publication, the manual was adopted as the template for soil handling and assessment in the region. It was utilized extensively in the classification of pre-disturbance and post-disturbance soils/landscapes throughout the region, a Master of Science thesis addressing one of the primary areas of concern was completed (Moskal 1998), and a revised version of the manual issued in 1998.

While the LCCS was being field tested, a second multi-party working group was convened to provide recommendations on the establishment of terrestrial ecosystems to support productive forest and wildlife habitat on reclaimed Oil Sands disturbances. This working group came to be referred to as the Vegetation Working Group. The manual, “Guidelines for Reclamation of Terrestrial Vegetation in the Athabasca Oil Sands Region”, was completed by this working group in 1998.

Both groups fulfilled their original mandates of providing guidelines/manuals for industry and government to utilize while engaging in the ongoing reclamation activities occurring in the North East Boreal Region. Both groups also recognized that their manuals were “living documents” that required further evaluation in the field through structured monitoring programs and focussed research targeting “soft spots” in the assumptions. Because of the close link between soil placement and ecosite phase establishment, these monitoring and research programs were logically linked. In the fall of 1999, the Soil and Vegetation Working groups reconvened at a joint meeting to discuss the program required to “calibrate” the manuals. A long term monitoring and calibration program was reviewed and approved by the joint working group, with the pilot phase of the program being implemented in 2000.

Several issues around long-term needs/demands on information from these plots as well as requirements for this information from a variety of other user groups prompted the group to reflect on the need to formally merge the two working groups. The merged group would function over the longer term life of the monitoring program and ensure that the manuals were in fact “living documents” and responded to changes in knowledge /needs/technology with time.

This group integrated into CEMA as the Soils and Vegetation Sub-Group of the Reclamation Working Group in 2001-2002. In April 2009 RWG underwent an approved reorganization and renamed the SVSG the Terrestrial Subgroup (TSG).