



# Meeting your goals Naturally ...with Conservation Agreements

*Owning land is something that comes naturally to people in Manitoba. Many people came here in search of a better life and prosperity. They found it on homesteads, farms and ranches. Keeping the land healthy and productive is the life's work for many of those landowners.*

"I think everybody's longterm goal should be to improve the production of the land, and wetlands intact go in that direction. We've come through this phase in agriculture where we've drained the land to increase production with no other consequence. But we're realizing that diversity of landscape and water on pastures keeps the land healthier in the longterm."

- Ryan Canart, Miniota, Manitoba

The Manitoba government proclaimed the Conservation Agreements Act in response to requests by Manitoba landowners to allow protection of habitat on their properties without the loss of ownership.

Conservation Agreements are tools landowners can use to meet their long term conservation goals. Ducks Unlimited Canada is one of seven wildlife agencies in Manitoba eligible to hold a Conservation Agreement. We can help you find a solution to fit your land, naturally.

### **One Size doesn't fit all**

This land has always provided your family with a livelihood and you've always enjoyed seeing wildlife around your place. Now you are in a position to keep your land the way you want, forever. Conservation agreements are tailored to meet the needs of each individual. They take into account the owner's goals for the future use of the land, financial implications and environmental benefits of each agreement. Its up to you to decide what type of agreement suits your situation.

At Ducks, we are committed to helping you meet your goals. You may want to make sure others will conserve the land and water resources by not breaking, cultivating or converting it to cropland. Or you may want Ducks Unlimited Canada to manage the lands for wildlife use, which may include resting the habitat, grazing, or haying the habitat. We'll work with you to find the option that works best for you.

### **Conservation Agreements have real value:**

That value comes in two parts. The most important is satisfaction knowing you have protected natural features – the native grassland, wetlands, creeks or other natural areas – for the benefit of future generations of people and wildlife.

The second is the value conservation agreements can generate either through a paid agreement, or in tax advantages through donated conservation agreements.

### **What works best for your situation?**

A Conservation Agreement (CA) is a written mutual agreement between a landowner and a holder that creates a conservation interest in the land without the loss of ownership. It runs with the land title and is binding upon subsequent owners.

According to the Manitoba Conservation Agreements Act:

"... it is in the best interests of the people of Manitoba and consistent with the principles of sustainable development, that land owners and conservation agencies be able to enter into conservation agreements for the protection and enhancement of natural ecosystems; wildlife or fisheries habitat; and plant or animal species."



**Ducks Unlimited Canada**  
Conserving Canada's Wetlands

Active by nature.



## Finding a Conservation Partner

Entering in to a Conservation Agreement is a significant decision for both the landowner and the CA holder. At Ducks we take the business of conservation very seriously. Ducks Unlimited is committed to working with landowners across Manitoba to meet their personal and business goals. Here's the story of one of our valued partners.

### Beat and Regina Gamper, Manitoba

When Beat and Regina Gamper moved to southwest Manitoba from Switzerland in 1991, their story echoed that of many hopeful new immigrants - arriving here with few possessions and big dreams.

Beat Gamper's stint as an exchange student in Manitoba in the 1980s "put the bug" in him to start a grain farm in the province. When he realized that dream in 1991, Gamper was determined avoid what he says were huge mistakes farmers like his father had made back home. He dreamed of owning a farm where nature and agriculture work together.

"I think for many people, you don't know what you've got until it's gone. My Dad destroyed wetlands on our farm in Switzerland, and that had an effect on me," Gamper says. He remembers watching farmers drain and fill wetlands throughout his childhood, only to realize, several years later, that this meant losing all the natural benefits those wetlands provided as well. These days, says Gamper, there's a lucrative business in Switzerland in rebuilding those lost wetland habitats.

Although he owned only a single quarter section of land and no farm equipment when he arrived in Manitoba, Gamper was determined to "save a piece for Mother Nature." Over the years, he's watched this conservation ethic pay off.

"With wetlands, when you have torrential rains, you know the water is going somewhere . . . when you have a slough out there in the middle of the field, it's feeding your grain roots," Gamper says as one example of how wetlands help regulate his land, even in times of drought or flood. "If I drained the wetland, the water would rush south - I'd have more erosion, more flooding. A healthy ecosystem helps your farm work."

It appears that what's good for the land is good for business as well. From that first section of land the Gampers have now grown their farm to 11 quarter-sections of consistently successful wheat and other annual crops. From the get-go, they worked closely with Ducks to protect wetlands and native uplands on their lands - to the benefit of waterfowl, other wildlife, and their family.

As nature lovers and birding enthusiasts, restoring and protecting wetlands on their land has created many opportunities for the Gampers to enjoy nature in their own backyard. Gamper says this and many other wetland benefits have been invaluable. He's even put monies received from Conservation Agreements back to work for his business by paying off his taxes. But Gamper also acknowledges that it's challenging, given the pressures of the ag industry. "We need more protection for wetlands," he says, supporting the creation of incentives and policies to keep wetlands in place for years to come.

Recently, the Gampers signed a Conservation Agreement with Ducks, which will protect more than 70 acres of their natural lands in perpetuity. Gamper worked with Ducks to restore seven wetlands on his land as part of the agreement, in addition to the 25 acres of wetlands and 36 acres of upland habitat already in existence. "I really hope more farmers will sign up with Ducks," says Gamper. "Ducks is a good organization. They're honest, fair to farmers and don't lure you into things. With Ducks, farmers have a choice. And Ducks has good staff."



## ▶ For more information

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