

# **'Specialist Sign Off' and Reclamation Certificates: FAQ's**

## **Why has Alberta Environment revised the upstream oil and gas reclamation and remediation certification process?**

- There is a current backlog of processing Reclamation Certificate applications. Delays result in an unwarranted extension of surface leases and increased costs to industry.
- Some reclamation and remediation work is not being done properly. This adversely affects public confidence in government and industry.
- Given this, there is pressure to increase the quality of applications and the application processing time.

## **What is 'Specialist Sign off'?**

- Alberta Environment has proposed a change in the reclamation certificate process to include 'Specialist Sign off' – especially in site assessment.
- The Specialist assumes professional responsibility for the reclamation and remediation work done under their authority.
- Alberta Environment acknowledges that Professional Regulatory Organizations' members are best able to accept professional responsibility for specialist sign off to protect the public.
- All environmental practitioners currently working in reclamation and remediation will be able to continue to work. However, those who want to accept professional responsibility (and liability) for the work will need to be a member of a Professional Regulatory Organization.
- An Interim Certification Board is being established to qualify other practitioners for sign off, until appropriate membership categories are established by the Professional Agrologists, Professional Biologists, and others.

## **Who are Professional Regulatory Organizations (PROs)?**

- In reclamation and remediation work, the PROs represent over 6000 licensed environmental professionals. The PROs are: Alberta Institute of Agrologists (AIA), Alberta Society of Professional Biologists (ASPB), Association of the Chemical Profession of Alberta (ACPA), Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta (APEGGA), College of Alberta Professional Foresters (CAPF), and College of Alberta Professional Forest Technologists (CAPFT).

## **Why are PRO members responsible for 'Specialist Sign off'?**

- PROs have their primary accountability to the public of Alberta via legislation to ensure that public safety is protected. Member interests are secondary.

- Courts expect a higher standard of care from regulated professionals.
- Insurance Brokers have specific requirements for Commercial General Liability (CGL) and Errors and Omissions (E&O) insurance, which recognize the higher standard of care expected from professionals.
- PROs maintain standards of practice and ethical conduct for professional members which may include:
  - Strict licensure requirements based upon educational qualifications, work experience, professional practice and ethics
  - Enforced Code of Ethics
  - Practice reviews to 'audit' individuals and companies on random or targeted basis
  - Continuing Professional Development requirements
  - Investigation and Discipline processes for unethical or unskilled practice

## **What are the benefits of 'Specialist Sign off' to Landowners and Public?**

- The public is protected – all PROs have public safety as their primary objective.
- Competence of practitioners – continuing professional development and courses offered, joint practice standard developed, practice/peer reviews, investigations, discipline, professional and legal ramifications for unskilled/unethical practice.
- Public accountability and transparency - reporting of audit results, joint professions practice/peer review board reported to legislature.
- Financial institutions will more likely accept reclamation certificates from regulated, insured professionals - allowing landowners to use land as collateral for loans.

## **What are the benefits of 'Specialist Sign off' to Operators and Industry?**

- Ensure that the needs of industry are met - reduced time and cost of revised approval process.
- Professionals maintain liability/responsibility – operators can specify certain insurance levels, professionals are better able to get insurance.

## **What are the benefits of 'Specialist Sign off' to Alberta Environment and Government?**

- Definition of required competencies with Alberta Environment. Development of joint Practice Standard and courses to assure these competencies are met.
- Reclamation Applications that are complete, comprehensive, and accurate upon which Alberta Environment may rely - reducing government workload.
- Administratively efficient - implementation relying on existing professional legislation.
- Consistent with Alberta Government's existing professional legislation and reliance on PROs.