In general, regulators expect that disturbed sites in the boreal forest will undergo complete reclamation (recontouring, soil replacement and revegetation) with the goal of returning the site to pre-disturbance conditions and land use (equivalent land capability). Questions arise about the value of the reclamation activities for sites deemed to be on a trajectory towards developing a sustainable plant community from an ecological perspective (keeping in mind some grandfathering of what is acceptable with regards to species such as seeded grasses). Although, legislation and policies provide opportunities to vary from the general expectation with written approval from a specified decision maker (Director, Regulator, or Land Manager), however, there has been inconsistency in how decisions about these sites have been made (i.e., different levels of reclamation effort have been applied) and in how reclamation criteria is interpreted and applied in terms of defining what are acceptable conditions for certification. In the context of this project, the term ‘site’ is defined as a legacy upstream oil and gas wellsite and the associated facilities requiring reclamation per Alberta’s reclamation criteria for peatland and/or forested sites. The specific sites in question are those that were constructed using imported mineral soil pads in peatlands and/or upland sites that have had vegetation encroachment which present one or more reclamation deficiencies to meet current regulatory criteria. This project was established to evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of removing mineral soil pads in peatlands and/or upland sites, and disturbing established vegetation to modify soil and landscape features required to meet reclamation criteria. The objective of the project is to provide regulators, practitioners and industry stakeholders with management options to assist in making decisions around appropriate management and certification. The goal is to ensure that functioning ecosystems can be restored with an appropriate level of activity, and that sites will be eligible for reclamation certificate application. An overview of the project will be presented in addition to a description of the path forward.

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