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*"A Sustainable, Vibrant, and Diversified Community with Opportunities for All"*

## **COUNTY WINS PROVINCIAL AWARD**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

KITSCOTY, AB November 25, 2014

The Provincial Minister's Award recognizing Municipal Excellence has been awarded to the County of Vermilion River. The award recognizes Innovation for the continued implementation and success of the Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) program. The award was received from Alberta Municipal Affairs at both the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) conference in September and at the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts & Counties (AAMDC) conference November 18, 2014.

The ALUS program is a voluntary, incentive-based environmental program that recognizes and rewards the positive contributions that farmers make to clean air and water and biodiversity through their land management practices. The program rewards local producers and landowners for producing ecological goods and services by restoring and preserving natural areas on their land. Providing incentives to producers to restore less productive land back to natural areas or provide sustainable practices such as reduced tilling and soil conservation, produces benefits both financially and aesthetically. Natural areas produce more habitat for wildlife, birds and invertebrates. Water quality is improved via filtration through wetlands. The benefits to the program are endless. ALUS is about growing a healthier environment. The original 3 year pilot project established in conjunction with Delta Waterfowl continues with approximately 20 landowners and 2,000 acres enrolled in the program.

County of Vermilion River Reeve Daryl Watt says *"This program makes our municipality more accountable and responsible for environmental practices and shows support to the agricultural community. We are proud of the hard work and innovative thinking behind this award."*

The County greatly appreciates the hours put into the program by our outstanding staff and administration, as well as the strong collaboration with Delta Waterfowl, Alberta Conservation Association, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, and Cows & Fish. And of course, success would not come without the innovative and forward-thinking rural landowners whom have embraced sustainable practices and have become champions for the program.

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