



Responsible management of peatlands in Canada, from peat industry to oil sands

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Canada harbors one third of the peat resources of the world. Peat is an accumulated organic matter composed of dead and partly decomposed plant material, forming huge deposit through time in wetlands like peatlands and boreal coniferous swamps. Peat is a valuable resource as a growing media and soil amendments, an eco-friendly absorbent, also used as biofilters, for body care and for wastewater treatment. Peatlands also offer valuable ecological services : for example, they are the most efficient terrestrial ecosystem to store carbon on a long-term basis. Their ability to "cool off" the planet warrants a good look at their management.

The horticultural peat industry of Canada has invested 22 years in R&D in habitat restoration and is now a strong leader in managing industrial peatlands in a sustainable way. The oil sand industry, which is strongly impacting the wetland landscapes of northern Canada, does realize that it has to reduce its ecological footprint, which is heavily criticized around the world. Decommissioned open mines near Fort McMurray have already begun recreating peatland ecosystems, and some restoration attempts of former oil pads are underway in the Peace River region. But the restoration of the largely disturbed wetland landscape of the oil sands is commanding innovative solutions.