

# OSRIN's Design and Implementation Strategy

Oil Sands Research and Information Network  
University of Alberta  
School of Energy and the Environment

July 2011



## **Oil Sands Research and Information Network**

OSRIN is a university-based, independent organization that compiles, interprets and analyses available knowledge about returning landscapes and water impacted by oil sands mining to a natural state and gets that knowledge into the hands of those who can use it to drive breakthrough improvements in reclamation regulations and practices. OSRIN is a project of the University of Alberta's School of Energy and the Environment (SEE). OSRIN was launched with a start-up grant of \$4.5 million from Alberta Environment and a \$250,000 grant from the Canada School of Energy and Environment Ltd.

OSRIN provides:

- Governments with the independent, objective, credible information and analysis required to put appropriate regulatory and policy frameworks in place
- Media, opinion leaders and the general public with the facts about oil sands development, its environmental and social impacts, and landscape/water reclamation activities – so that public dialogue and policy is informed by solid evidence
- Industry with ready access to an integrated view of research that will help them make and execute reclamation plans – a view that crosses disciplines and organizational boundaries

OSRIN recognizes that much research has been done in these areas by a variety of players over 40 years of oil sands development. OSRIN synthesizes this collective knowledge and presents it in a form that allows others to use it to solve pressing problems. Where we identify knowledge gaps, we seek research partners to help fill them.

### **Citation**

This report may be cited as:

OSRIN, 2011. *OSRIN's Design and Implementation Strategy*. Oil Sands Research and Information Network, University of Alberta, School of Energy and the Environment, Edmonton, Alberta. OSRIN Report No. SR-7. 10 pp.

Copies of this report may be obtained from OSRIN at [osrin@ualberta.ca](mailto:osrin@ualberta.ca) or through the OSRIN website at <http://www.osrin.ualberta.ca> or directly from the University of Alberta's Education & Research Archive at <http://hdl.handle.net/10402/era.17507>.

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## **REPORT SUMMARY**

The Oil Sands Research and Information Network spent considerable time and effort working with the Board of Directors and stakeholders to establish its design and implementation strategy. The strategy helps guide the identification of funding priorities so OSRIN can fulfill its mandate to create and share knowledge. The products arising from this effort included:

- OSRIN's Strategy Roadmap
- OSRIN's Logic Model
- OSRIN's Strategic Approach
- The OSRIN Story

This report is intended to give you a clear picture of OSRIN's focus and approach to fulfilling its mandate. The products listed above are intended to be living documents and may change as we gain experience and receive feedback from stakeholders. For example, the OSRIN Story has changed over time as we have discussed OSRIN with stakeholders and have responded to questions about our focus.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This work was funded through the operating grants OSRIN received from Alberta Environment.

OSRIN is grateful for the advice and direction provided by the Board of Directors in shaping the design and implementation strategy.

The following consultants were contracted to assist with the development of the strategic design:

- Innovation Expedition Consulting Ltd. – Keith Jones and David Forrest
- Redoaks Management Consulting Ltd. – Jan Simpson
- Murgatroyd Inc. Communications & Consulting – Stephen Murgatroyd

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

The Oil Sands Research and Information Network (OSRIN) spent considerable time and effort in 2009 to establish its design and implementation strategy so we could fulfill our mandate. OSRIN's mandate is to create and share knowledge so that:

- Alberta can continue to improve oil sands reclamation regulation and practice, and
- Albertans and others are better informed about oil sands impacts, research and management

We do this by funding research, issuing reports and sharing knowledge through our website.

We worked with our Board of Directors and a variety of knowledgeable stakeholders to obtain a broad range of views on OSRIN's mandate, audience and focus of work.

The products arising from this effort included:

- OSRIN's Strategy Roadmap
- OSRIN's Logic Model
- OSRIN's Strategic Approach
- The OSRIN Story

Collectively, these documents give a clear picture of OSRIN's focus and approach to fulfilling its mandate.

## **2 OSRIN'S STRATEGY ROADMAP**

Outcome mapping was chosen as the method for developing OSRIN's strategy. Outcome mapping is an approach for defining and managing complex, multi-stakeholder strategic initiatives. It clarifies the outcomes that must be achieved to realize the strategic outcomes, and identifies all of the necessary and sufficient actions required to achieve them.

The OSRIN Strategy Roadmap is shown in [Appendix 1](#).

## **3 OSRIN'S LOGIC MODEL**

The Logic Model was developed after the Strategy Roadmap was built. The Logic Model is a means of visually depicting the linkages between OSRIN's outcomes and the expected impact of its work, both of which were discussed in developing the Roadmap.

The OSRIN Logic Model is presented in [Appendix 2](#).

#### **4 OSRIN'S STRATEGIC APPROACH**

The Strategic Approach identifies how OSRIN will conduct its business and includes four main strategies:

1. Strategic Knowledge Synthesis
2. Research
3. Communications
4. Organizational Sustainability

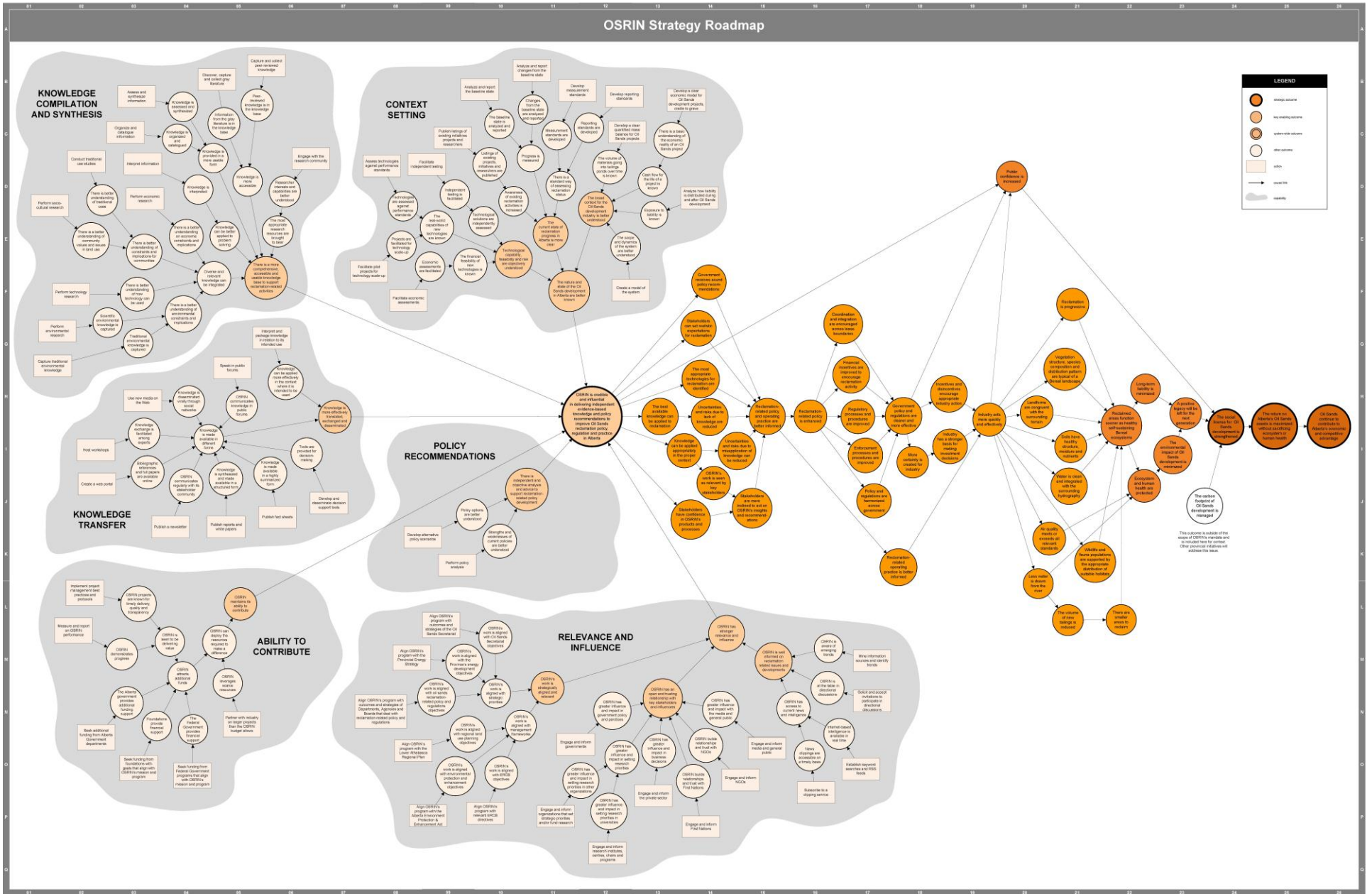
OSRIN's Strategic Approach is described in [Appendix 3](#).

#### **5 THE OSRIN STORY**

The OSRIN Story was crafted as a short, simple tool to communicate what and who OSRIN is and what we do, and in particular to convert the Strategy Roadmap into plain language. The Story was initially drafted by OSRIN, refined with the aid of our consultants and then further modified based on questions and feedback received during the stakeholder consultation process.

The OSRIN Story is presented in [Appendix 4](#).

# APPENDIX 1: OSRIN Strategy Roadmap





APPENDIX 2: OSRIN Logic Model



## **APPENDIX 3: OSRIN's Strategic Approach**

OSRIN is pursuing four main strategies:

1. Strategic Knowledge Synthesis
2. Research
3. Communications
4. Organizational Sustainability

### ***Strategy 1 – Strategic Knowledge Synthesis***

Strategic Knowledge Synthesis involves the following five step process:

- *Issue Identification:* Identify the key questions or challenges. These may be challenges confronting regulators as they pursue the goal of ensuring that that reclaimed post-mining landscapes meet Provincial objectives. They may be challenges confronting companies as they seek to most effectively reclaim landscapes.
- *Scoping Study to define state of knowledge and critical gaps:* Commission and oversee scoping studies to define state of knowledge. In most cases, this will involve retaining an expert with significant experience in the issue area. The scoping study will involve identifying and synthesizing existing knowledge, identifying the key people engaged in addressing the issue, and acquiring and summarizing the important literature. A preliminary identification of knowledge gaps is an important product of the scoping study.
- *Expert Validation:* Circulate the draft scoping study to an independent panel of experts for reaction and comment. The experts would include academics, and personnel from industry and government. This stage may involve a workshop to bring the expert panel together to arrive at alignment on the state of knowledge, knowledge gaps and to identify areas where the experts agree to disagree. Part of this process will involve definition of a research agenda to address the knowledge gaps.
- *Publication of study and action plan to respond to gaps:* Publish the findings of the scoping study and the expert panel conclusions.
- *Promotion of R&D program to address gaps:* Engage potential funding partners in developing an R&D program to address the remaining knowledge needs.

### ***Strategy 2 – Research Strategy***

OSRIN is defining knowledge gaps in terms of barriers to taking action: (1) if policy and or operating organizations lack the knowledge of how to proceed, a gap exists; or (2) if it is clear how to proceed, but there are concerns or unknown factors that may lead to unexpected and undesirable consequences of the action, a knowledge gap exists. In either case, OSRIN would develop a research program to address the knowledge gaps.

OSRIN will seek other organizations and funding sources to partner in funding an R&D project/program to address gaps. In most cases, the R&D program would be structured to

1. define clearly what expected outcomes are desired,

2. identify potential researchers who are interested in and capable of developing solutions to the knowledge gaps, and
3. fund one or more projects to provide the missing knowledge.

### ***Strategy 3 – Communications Strategy***

OSRIN's communications strategy consists of 3 elements: (1) Maintaining informal and formal contacts with key stakeholders, (2) establishing and maintaining a web portal, and (3) hosting a series of dialogues and workshops directed at developing shared understanding of key issues.

#### *Maintaining Contacts with Key Stakeholders*

To establish and maintain credibility and influence, OSRIN must be seen to be part of the community. This will involve creating, developing and maintaining regular informal contact with key individuals and organizations. It will also involve participating in organizations and processes by which knowledge is shared, processed and implemented in policy.

#### *Web Portal*

The primary element of OSRIN's communications strategy is to develop a web portal to serve as a vehicle to provide knowledge products to multiple stakeholders. We may also explore the use of social networking tools such as Twitter, and Facebook to acquire and distribute content and to enhance traffic to the web portal.

We intend to link to existing and emerging sites so we avoid duplication of content. OSRIN will publish on our site only those materials that are not available through existing sites.

Key elements of the portal could include:

- A report Archive will provide, to the extent feasible, access to full text reports. OSRIN intends to bring together in one place a means of accessing all publically reports related to land and water impacts of surface mining of oil sands.
- Background papers that provide insights into the context within which oil sands development is occurring.
- Policy analysis papers that examine key questions and present alternative scenarios of potential policy options that might respond to the issues.
- A site for Dialogue around key issues. Oil sands development occurs within the context of economic, social, cultural, geopolitical, environmental, ethical and technical forces. The web portal intends to be a host for public dialogue on these issues to facilitate Albertans in evolving their understanding of the issues and tradeoffs involved in managing the development of their oil sands resource. This area will include links to influential bloggers and columnists that are contributing to the public debate.
- Sense making, fact checking and accountability. The discussion of oil sands development involves many conflicting voices with differing agendas. Not infrequently, information is presented in differing ways to make particular points. From time to time, mis-information is published. One of the functions of the site

will be to help clarify the seemingly conflicting facts and illuminate incorrect fact or assertion in the media.

#### *Dialogues and Workshops*

OSRIN intends to engage the professional community through dialogues and workshops that will explore key issues. These types of events will be especially important in seeking alignment among experts on key issues.

#### ***Strategy 4 – Organizational Sustainability***

OSRIN is taking a two pronged approach to organizational sustainability. The first involves leveraging our resources to create win-win opportunities to advance our mission and help partner organizations advance their missions. The second involves actively seeking to create value for potential future investors and seeking long-term funding partnerships.

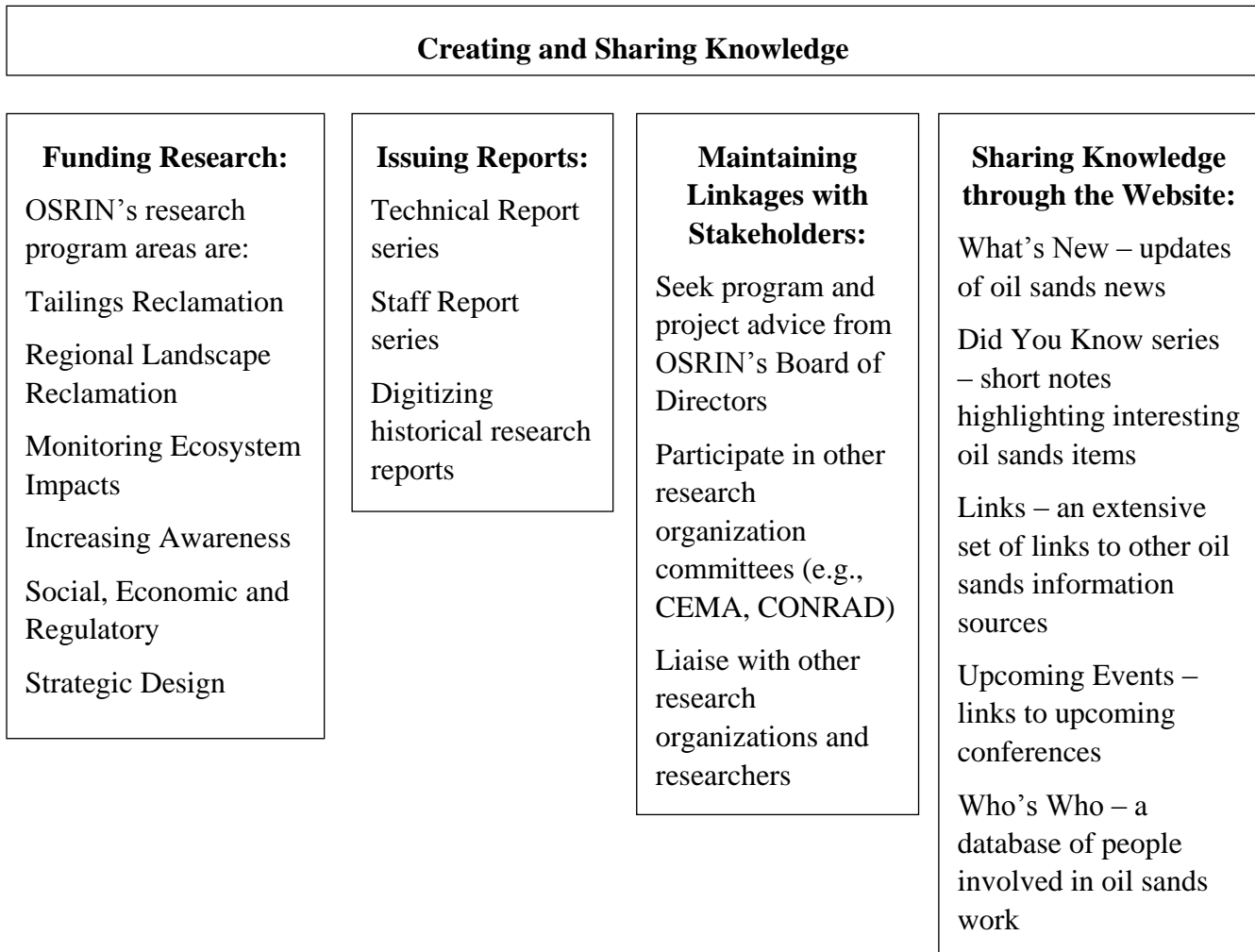
The first element of the strategy will involve seeking out opportunities to partner with organizations such as PTAC, OSLI, the Helmholtz-Alberta Initiative to advance the agenda of substantial improvement in the environmental performance of oil sands mining. In many cases this will involve investing our funds outside of OSRIN to contribute to programs and projects that advance our mission.

OSRIN intends to be opportunistic in pursuing funding for projects, but not at the expense of remaining focused on our mission. OSRIN is not about capturing dollars simply to increase the budget.

OSRIN is proceeding on the basis and of the belief that if value is created for stakeholders, investors will commit to sustaining OSRIN's ability to continue to contribute.

## Implementing the Strategy

The following figure shows how OSRIN implements the Strategic Approach:



## **APPENDIX 4: The OSRIN Story**

### **Oil Sands Research and Information Network (OSRIN)**

#### **What is OSRIN's Vision?**

OSRIN is working toward a future in which Albertans can reap the economic benefits of oil sands development without sacrificing the health of the natural ecosystem or human health.

#### **Why OSRIN?**

Albertans, as well as others across the world, are increasingly concerned about the environmental impacts of oil sands development. Alberta is investing to develop the technology and practices necessary to improve environmental performance. Alberta Environment has invested in OSRIN to address issues related to impact of oil sands development on water and land. OSRIN's role is to help Alberta "do the right thing" to ensure healthy, self-sustaining boreal landscapes after mining and processing oil sands.

#### **What is OSRIN?**

OSRIN is a university-based, independent organization that compiles, interprets and analyses available knowledge about returning landscapes and water impacted by oil sands mining to a natural state and gets that knowledge into the hands of those who can use it to drive breakthrough improvements in reclamation regulations and practices. OSRIN is a project of the University of Alberta's School of Energy and the Environment (SEE).

#### **Who are OSRIN's Customers?**

We provide:

**Governments** with the independent, objective, credible information and analysis required to put appropriate regulatory and policy frameworks in place

**Media, opinion leaders and the general public** with the facts about oil sands development, its environmental and social impacts, and landscape/water reclamation activities – so that public dialogue and policy is informed by solid evidence

**Industry** with ready access to an integrated view of research that will help them make and execute reclamation plans – a view that crosses disciplines and organizational boundaries

#### **Who pays for OSRIN work?**

OSRIN was launched with a start-up grant of \$4.5 million from Alberta Environment and a \$250,000 grant from the Canada School of Energy and Environment Ltd. We intend to seek partners and additional financial supporters with whom to collaborate in sustaining this work.

#### **Where will OSRIN focus?**

OSRIN's initial focus is on providing information that helps facilitate development of regulations, practice, and technology that support:

Reclamation of oil sands tailings – reducing the footprint and impact of tailings ponds and disposal areas

Landscape reclamation – integration of reclamation regulations with the regional land-use planning framework to return mining and processing sites to successful, self-sustaining boreal landscapes that meet citizens’ expectations; this will include work on terrestrial, wetland and waterbody reclamation

Identification and minimization of the effects of oil sands mining on ecosystem health

We recognize that much research has been done in these areas by a variety of players over 40 years of oil sands development. OSRIN synthesizes this collective knowledge and presents it in a form that allows others to use it to solve pressing problems. Where we identify knowledge gaps, we seek research partners to help fill them.

**How does OSRIN define success?**

OSRIN will have succeeded if by 2013 we are positioned to continue as a credible and influential source of information and policy guidance.

**Who do I contact for more information?**

Contact Chris Powter, Executive Director at [powter@ualberta.ca](mailto:powter@ualberta.ca)