

August 30, 2006

Alberta implements Water Management Plan for the South Saskatchewan River Basin

Plan sets a balance between needs of environment and economy

Edmonton... A long-term vision for managing the water supply for southern Alberta has been approved by the province through its South Saskatchewan River Basin (SSRB) Water Management Plan. The first of its kind in Alberta, the water management plan recommends new ways of managing water resources to help balance the needs of the environment and economy.

As part of the plan, Alberta Environment will no longer accept new water licence applications for the Bow, Oldman, and South Saskatchewan sub-basins. Water allocations may still be obtained through water allocation transfers.

"This is a monumental and significant decision that clearly demonstrates this government's commitment to protecting our watersheds, while sustaining our economy," said Environment Minister Guy Boutilier. "By no longer accepting new water licences, we can ensure our river systems are better protected for this generation and generations to come, and encourage Albertans to become more efficient and innovative in their water use."

The plan was founded on recommendations made by four basin advisory committees, along with consultation with stakeholders and members of the general public. More than 80 per cent of southern Alberta water users involved with this planning process - including industry, environmental, and local community leaders - support Alberta Environment no longer accepting water applications for new water allocations in the Bow, Oldman and South Saskatchewan River sub-basins.

The SSRB plan was developed to safeguard existing water user's supply while protecting the aquatic environment, as outlined in *Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability*. For more information on *Water for Life*, or to read the South Saskatchewan River Basin Water Management Plan, visit www.environment.gov.ab.ca.

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Note:

See attached backgrounder.

Media enquiries may be directed to:

Sherri-Dawn Annett
Communications
Alberta Environment
(780) 427-6267
Sherri-Dawn.Annett@gov.ab.ca

To call toll-free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

Backgrounder

Water Management Plan for the South Saskatchewan River Basin

This water management plan reflects a balance between protecting the aquatic environment and the amount of river water required for economic development in the South Saskatchewan River Basin (SSRB). The plan provides guidance to decision makers and acts as a foundation for future watershed management planning of sub-basins in the SSRB by Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils, as well as stewardship groups.

Principal recommendations

- Alberta Environment no longer accept applications for new water allocations in the Bow, Oldman and South Saskatchewan River Sub-basins until the Minister of Environment specifies, through a Crown Reservation, how water not currently allocated is to be used.
- Water be allocated from the Crown Reservation only for:
 - water conservation objectives;
 - water storage of peak flow;
 - licences and registrations that may be issued for applications and registrations pending at the date of the Crown Reservation. (This does not necessarily imply approval; but the pending applications and registration will be reviewed.); and
 - First Nations Reserves.
- When allocations in the Red Deer River Sub-basin reach 550,000 cubic decametres, a thorough review will be conducted to identify the maximum allocation limit.

Further information, including Q&As, the full water management plan, Highlights document, public consultation results and more can be found on Alberta Environment's website: www.environment.gov.ab.ca.

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