

Managing growth pressures

October 2, 2007

Alberta rolls out new environmental strategy to protect air, land and water

Industrial Heartland first project under new approach

Edmonton... The Alberta government has unveiled a broad new approach to address cumulative effects on the environment, with the first application of the plan set for the Industrial Heartland, a 470-square-kilometer area just northeast of Edmonton.

Under the new approach, a series of comprehensive, science-based targets, outcomes and actions have been set for Alberta's Industrial Heartland to protect the air, land and water of the Capital Region.

"As we face unprecedented growth in our province, with development on a scale we have not seen before, we must be assured we balance that growth with protection of the environment," said Premier Ed Stelmach. "Albertans must know that their government is looking at the big picture, and preserving our environmental heritage for future generations."

The actions for Alberta's Capital Region model the new cumulative effects management framework, which will be rolled out in other areas within the province. The Industrial Heartland application will also become the key environmental component of the Capital Region Integrated Growth Management plan, currently underway for the region.

"This new framework moves us away from looking at impacts of development on a project-by-project basis, to a system which considers all the potential impacts within a region," said Rob Renner, Minister of Environment. "Every landscape is different, and this approach allows us to adapt our system to meet the immediate needs of a region, like the Industrial Heartland."

The plan for the Heartland lays out clear targets for air quality, puts in place a water management framework to ensure water quality and quantity are protected, and establishes guidelines to protect the land in the region. The targets, outcomes and actions apply to all major industrial users in the region. The airshed targets will be validated with stakeholders and are scheduled to come into effect January 2009. The other outcomes and actions are effective immediately. Discussions on implementation of the plan will occur over the coming months with the public and affected stakeholders.

Some of the concrete actions for the Industrial Heartland include:

- all large industrial facilities within the Industrial Heartland will be subject to a cumulative airshed target of 25,000 tonnes per year of NOX and 28,000 tonnes per year of SO₂;
- using science-based thresholds, baseline data and limits on 100 different parameters to ensure water quantity and quality outcomes are achieved; and,
- protecting the regional wetlands and groundwater, ensuring that land is reclaimed and mitigating any potential harmful changes to wildlife or habitat by implementing minimum setbacks from the North Saskatchewan river.

"Over the coming months, we will be talking to some of our key stakeholders about the cumulative effects approach," said Renner. "Albertans will have a key role to play in helping to balance

sustainability with appropriate growth.” He noted that elements of the framework, including the approach to shared objectives, have already been tested through other initiatives, like the province’s *Water for Life* strategy.

The Industrial Heartland region includes four affected municipalities and has a strong existing industrial base - oil and gas, processing and petrochemical facilities.

For more information about the Industrial Heartland project, or the cumulative effects management framework, visit www.environment.alberta.ca

Managing cumulative effects on the environment is key to Premier Ed Stelmach's plan to managing growth pressures. Other priorities for the government are to govern with integrity and transparency, provide safe and secure communities, improve Albertans' quality of life, and build a stronger Alberta.

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Attachments: Question and answer document and map of the region are attached.

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October 2, 2007

Cumulative Effects Management Framework

The Alberta government announced a broad new approach to address cumulative effects on the environment and the first application of the plan in the Industrial Heartland, a 317-square kilometer area just northeast of Edmonton. The government also announced a series of comprehensive, science-based targets, outcomes and actions that have been set for Alberta's Industrial Heartland to protect the air, land and water of the Capital Region.

Why is the Government of Alberta changing its approach to managing environmental impacts?

The current regulatory system is primarily based on managing and mitigating the impacts of individual projects, often through legislation aimed at specific resources, such as timber or water.

The system is limited in its ability to address the cumulative effects of a number of individually regulated projects and unregulated activities, or to consider impacts across air, land and water in an integrated manner.

What does the cumulative effects management framework approach mean?

Because every landscape is different, and requires setting different outcomes to protect the environment, the cumulative effects management framework will consider environmental implications of development on a regional basis.

Under this approach, the Alberta government will adopt new methods to protect the environment, including setting regional environmental objectives, building external partnerships and developing long-term shared outcomes.

The new approach will evolve the present environmental management system to make sure the cumulative effects of development are considered as part of regular business.

Regional assessments and projections will be addressed over more meaningful geographic scales and time spans. The existing project-based environmental impact assessment process will be streamlined, with more focus on environmental assessments that deal directly with the shared environmental objectives for the region.

Does this approach replace the existing regulatory framework?

The new approach is neither a replacement of existing project regulatory requirements, under such legislation as the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*, nor is it another layer of requirements for industry.

Environmental regulation will have its place in the new system and individual companies will still need to know and be held accountable to enforceable requirements. Each department and board will continue to fulfill its mandate. The new approach enables a full spectrum of non-regulatory and policy tools, including economic incentives, education and voluntary action all aimed at achieving the objectives.

Will this approach be used in the oil sands?

Yes - in fact, some elements of this approach have already been used with respect to the oil sands, most notably the Athabasca River Water Management Framework. This framework sets strict limits on the amount of water oil sands companies can remove from the river, protecting the river ecosystem and

balancing the needs of local communities and industry. There will be more work done in the oil sands region with the development of an updated Regional Sustainable Development Strategy.

How does the cumulative effects approach connect to the *Water for Life* strategy and the Land Use Framework? The cumulative effects management framework adopts a similar approach to resolving related issues and will contribute to the progress of those other initiatives.

What are the next steps for the framework?

Consultations with key stakeholders about the approach used in the cumulative effects management framework will occur over the coming months. All Albertans are also invited to submit comments about the framework. Deadline for submission of comments is November 30, 2007.

Other elements of the framework will be modeled in two other projects - one in east central Alberta, and one in southern Alberta. These other projects will build the shared governance framework, including an opportunity for public input, helping to set shared outcomes for that region.

Questions and Answers: Industrial Heartland

What is the Industrial Heartland project about?

There is significant proposed industrial development for the region. An additional eight proposed upgrader developments are expected to process approximately 1.5 million barrels per day.

Phase I of the Industrial Heartland project provides strategies, actions and targets to sustain the quality of the capital region's environment. Because of the pace of growth in the region and the need for immediate action, the Alberta government has set emission targets to protect our air, will establish a watershed management framework for the North Saskatchewan River to protect our water and set policy directions to protect our land.

Phase II of the project will allow municipalities, local residents, non-governmental organizations and industry the opportunity to review and confirm these strategies and targets.

How does this connect to the Capital Region Integrated Growth Management Plan?

The Industrial Heartland application will become the key environmental component for the Capital Region Integrated Growth Management Plan.

What are the next steps?

As part of Phase II of the Industrial Heartland project, the environmental outcomes set for the Industrial Heartland will be reviewed with stakeholders to determine the best and fastest way to implement them.

A regional working group has been established to further refine the water management framework. An Air Working Group will be established, helping to determine the allocation of the airshed objectives, and the best and fastest way to implement the allocation system. A sulphur management working group will also be formed, assisting operators with best practices, helping to reduce the risk to human health or the environment.

Public information sessions will be held this fall with local residents, allowing them to further understand the Industrial Heartland project.

Air

What are the environmental targets for air?

There will be a limit on total emissions in the airshed for nitrogen oxide (NOX) of 25,000 tonnes per year and total emissions of sulphur dioxide (SO₂) of 28,000 tonnes per year. These limits will be allocated between all current and projected facilities in the Industrial Heartland that emit more than 100 tonnes per year of either NOX or SO₂.

Where do these air targets apply and when will they come into effect?

The targets apply to the entire Industrial Heartland airshed. The targets will be validated with

stakeholders and are scheduled to come into effect January 2009.

How will the targets for air be affected by pending federal targets?

The federal regulatory framework is looking at sector-based allocations within an overall national emissions cap, while Alberta is taking an airshed approach. Alberta will work with the federal government to ensure that the shared environmental outcomes are being achieved.

Water

What are the outcomes for water?

In order to protect the water quality and quantity of the North Saskatchewan river, a water management framework will be developed. This framework will set minimum water quantity and quality thresholds, ensuring adequate river flow, water quality and biotic requirements are met.

In addition, a working group has been set up to develop an integrated regional solution to address the water quantity and quality issues including the possibility of using recycled water from the Capital Region or other municipal sources for the upgraders.

Land

What are the actions for land?

Land management will consist of site planning targets to protect wetlands; prevent groundwater contamination; protect the North Saskatchewan River through increased setbacks; and, the development of a sulphur management plan to ensure efficient handling and storage of the sulphur stockpiles.

When will these actions come into effect?

The guidelines for protection of wetlands are already in place, and other issues - such as setbacks and sulphur management - will be dealt with through the approval process.

Where can I find out more?

For more information, including technical specifics, please visit www.environment.alberta.ca.

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To view copy of the map click on the following link [Industrial heartland map.pdf](#)

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