

# Water availability engagement – Phase 1

October 2024 – January 2025

## Ideas

An online ideas board was available during phase 1 of the water availability engagement. Below are the ideas that were submitted in their original form, without edits or alterations.

A practical, common-sense response to increasing water availability in Alberta would be to implement rainwater harvesting systems. By encouraging homeowners and businesses to collect and use rainwater for non-potable purposes, such as irrigation and toilet flushing, Alberta could reduce pressure on existing water supplies. This method is straightforward to adopt and can lead to significant water savings, promoting both conservation and resilience against droughts. Plus, it empowers communities to take an active role in managing their water resources more sustainably.

Canadians are amongst the most wasteful and resource-using per capita in the world, with Albertans amongst the most wasteful in Canada. Reducing population growth is the best way to reduce wasteful resource use, including water use. Education of ways consumers can reduce water use will also help, but that needs to be frequent and using channels and at times that people actually see, so it translates into immediate action.

Make grey water systems mandatory in new houses. Stop sales of toilets that are not dual flush. Give incentives to change all the old ones.

Help municipalities deal with losses of water in their system.

Government should ask industry to source water from wastewater.

Promote natural water storage -> wetlands. Agriculture is either too wet or not wet enough so how can we buffer this?

Consider making WCO a condition on licences issued prior to 2006 to address water availability for river health.

I would suggest a move towards the feasibility and construction of the Eyremore dam as the most practical way to increase the efficiency of water management in the south.

Solutions should be derived from nature/natural infrastructure—particularly the conservation and restoration of wetlands.

One major local source of water has so far been ignored: water from melted snow, snow farming is used extensively at ski resorts to extend the skiing season.

Saline water for hydraulic fracking. At this time freshwater is used for hydraulic fracturing and is not returned to the water cycle. Saline water can be used instead, at a cost. This could be legislated.

No inter-basin transfers. Aquifer integrity supersedes demand!

Store water- focus on conservation in both residential and non-residential environments.

Support the energy transition to technology and industry that use less water.	More and bigger dams. Keep Ag. a priority.
Store water from drainage districts.	Measurement and storage.
Promote the existing transfer system.	Polluted water from coalmines is not good for anything or anyone.
Allow small inter-basin transfers from North Saskatchewan to South Basins.	Water storage (reservoirs). Eliminate the 10% hold back on water license.
More dams upstream of Calgary.	Easier allocation searching database and portals to help initiate temporary transfers, create a market for saving water in stressed basins.
Assist irrigators in becoming more efficient. This includes the districts, their infrastructure, and dams. Example: Rolkee ditch with pipe.	Build more dams—Milk River.
The current framework is fine. Do not open the <i>Water Act</i> . Storage is the key. Fund new reservoirs! No pricing of RAINWATER! No licence claw backs!	Increase efficiency. Municipal treatment process.
Understand that the agriculture industry is reducing water and increasing water efficiency, Educate public sentiment.	More \$\$ to irrigation districts to put water in pipelines and not in ditches.
Get people to do their water use reports and figure out how much there is.	Map and monitor groundwater quality and quantity.
Incentivize efficiency (no pricing schemes). Continue market-based systems (transfers). More storage faster. Let water licence holders work together, not government.	Only nature can decide if we get more water. More reservoirs don't make more water. Climate change is real.
Storage on the Bow. Storage in the south.	Re: Climate change. More sudden weather events means we need more ability to capture water when it comes and storage Otherwise rivers suffer.
Winter water storage. Build communication during drought i.e.) the Alberta gov website was not updated even after rainfalls in the spring.	Instream and off-stream storage.
Enhanced and formalization of cooperative initiatives to share and prioritize use of water. Communicate with ALL stakeholders.	More storage helps with bridging dry spells and helps irrigators and other users as well as flows in the river.

Water management requires tools. Use the ones in place. Drop the holdback. Build storage.	More transparency on effectiveness of existing protocols—communicate to all.
Onstream river storage.	Manage for resiliency of headwaters and rivers. NB given climate change predictions.
Convert more ditches and canals to pipelines.	Improve water licence transfer process. It is very effective.
Decreased water for irrigation means less crop yields.	Don't build the coal mine in the Crowsnest pass. It's short sighted and only benefits the Australian billionaire.
Stop the 10% claw back on licence transfers.	Better on-site storage such as Eyemore.
Extend irrigation water to Cypress County.	What provisions are being made for declining snowpack and climate change.
Monitor water at source and with software like we use in oil and gas. SCADA—example Zedi or Critical Control.	Stop adding acers.
Eyremore Dam. Increase storage and irrigation efficiency (pipelines).	Drinking water, water for agriculture, no to coal.
Enforcement of <i>Water Act</i> —Usage and licences.	Waste water reuse and recycling.
Enforce regulations and the consequences for those not in compliance.	In-stream water storage on the Sheep River.
Increase diversion capacity to off-stream reservoirs. Build new onstream reservoirs.	Stop industrial development in the Headwaters.
Off-stream storage.	No to coal, protect our water please.

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Municipal Incentives. Biomimicry, such as beaver dams. Use some of that ad funding for conservation efforts.

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Funding/guidance for grey water, reconsider use it or loose it allocations.

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Fast track restoration projects. Cut red tape for restoration projects seeking to improve the quantity and quality of water for the environment and agriculture by exempting restoration from *Water Act* authorizations, or by creating a Code of Practice.

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Store water across the watershed instead of at the bottom. Discontinue the outdated approach of building large and extremely expensive dams on major rivers which only benefit users near the dam, and shift towards many local water quantity and quality improvements such a beaver mimicry and restoration which costs little to nothing and has positive environmental and economic outcomes.

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Create framework for beaver translocation. Creating a policy on beaver translocation would allow “problem” beavers to be relocated to areas needing them, resulting in increased water storage and ecosystem health in donor habitats, while reducing conflict and cost at sites where beaver are deemed to be an issue.

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Set storage volumes for sub watersheds and fund natural approaches to achieving them. Set storage targets for sub watersheds and fund solutions which can deliver on these targets in a cost-effective manner with positive environmental outcomes, for example beaver mimicry and restoration, grazing best management practices, tree planting, sustainable agricultural projects etc. Creating a funding mechanism would enable a broad swath of civil society and professional organizations to become involved in restoring their watersheds.

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Outlaw beaver bounties. Removal of beaver from a watershed can substantially reduce its resilience to flood and drought and increase uncertainty and reliability of stream flows. Incentivizing indiscriminate killing of beaver is ill advised and can result in significant economic harm to downstream users such as agricultural producers, in addition to negative environmental impacts. This practice should be prohibited. Some counties currently pay a price per tail (currently \$20/tail in Beaver County), with no oversight, assessment or planning involved from the County or Alberta Environment and Parks. This is also in stark contrast to the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, to which Alberta is a signatory, which states that “Wildlife is owned by the public and managed by government agencies”.

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Reject TransAlta’s proposal to divert the Ghost River. TransAlta has proposed to rebuild their diversion on the upper Ghost River which blew out in 2013. This would result in the Ghost River having diminished flows and additional evaporative losses resulting from diverted Ghost River water sitting behind the Minnewanka Dam, Seebe Dam, and Horseshoe Dam, as opposed to flowing into the Ghost Reservoir. This is in addition to the devastating impacts this project would (once again) have on the Ghost River and federally listed Species at Risk including Bull Trout and Westslope Cutthroat Trout.

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No more new dams. The Bow and Red Deer Rivers are already overburdened with significant water resource demands, primarily from irrigation districts. Addressing demand side issues is the only sustainable long-term approach, but politicians continuously default to megaprojects which do not address the more complex underlying root causes of water insecurity. Building additional dams on the Bow and Red Deer Rivers will provide further justification to expand the total irrigated acreage in these basins, in turn creating its own problem requiring its own solution (more dams). The Bow River is already impounded for almost its entire length between the great plains and the front range of the Rockies, in spite of this we have continued water “shortage” issues and a “need” for more dams, this is known as a “solution-caused problem”. Both rivers are also home to a tremendous diversity of fish and wildlife, many of which are threatened by the spectre of dam projects which result in some of the most severe and permanent negative impacts on rivers among all land uses and stressors. One quarter of all freshwater species are threatened with extinction, including some fish living in both the Bow and Red Deer Rivers—e.g. Lake Sturgeon. NONE of the large dams on either the Bow or Red Deer River, or anywhere else in Alberta, have any fish passage facilities whatsoever, and these facilities have already drastically reduced the range and abundance of native fish in both watersheds and across the province. Dams do not address root causes of water insecurity.

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Create a stream restoration Code of Practice. Streambank rehabilitation activities that occur on fords or crossings require only a code of practice notification. However, the same activity on an eroding bank that is not a ford requires an authorization, which is a much more complicated and lengthy application. A restoration code of practice would simplify this process and facilitate more small-scale local stream stewardship activities.

## Current policies, programs and approaches

**Which policies, programs, or approaches to managing water are working effectively?  
Which need to be strengthened, and how?**

Agreement with BC for transboundary water allocation.

Drought threshold priority. In a certain threshold of drought, have priorities for use - household, farmer first, commercial after - not first come first serve idea.

*Alberta land stewardship act.* Have specific thresholds in regional plans for water protection and priorities for use - household and farmers first.

Consideration is needed to put into the MG Act, a section dealing with water issues.

Quasi-judicial (NRCB, AER) need more stringent requirements for confirming water availability and impacts when approving projects.

Make stopping mussel invasion a top priority because this affects all forever.

Grey and water that cannot be potable should be priority for fracking.

Act on advice from biologist Lorne Fitch "Streams of Consequence." Only selective logging in the headwaters to maintain and preserve healthy aquatic systems.

Incentivize high efficiency water use devices in Municipalities and Irrigation Districts.

If the *Water Act* is open how can Albertans be assured that our water will not be "sold" "for profit" to global energy organizations.

More storage, don't change the licensing.

Credits or incentives for water return to system including storm water.

Existing market-based transfer systems.

The government needs to speed up water transfers.

Do something about illegal diversion of ground and surface water.

We have to retain our existing water licenses.

East slopes are the ONLY water sources for southern Alberta. They must be protected from activities that degrade quality or reduce flow amounts/regimes.

Refine license transfer process. Review unused licenses.

**NO WATER FOR COALS MINES!**

On farm efficiency programs provide good incentives to improve water use.

Follow the auditor general's recommendations regarding WCO and management of surface water.

We are failing to achieve water conservation objectives and rivers are declining in health.

Do not allow coal mining to drain our precious water resources while polluting our air, water and land in southern AB.

Existing system works effectively - NO NEED TO CHANGE IT!	Regulatory legislation for transfer of licence. Not a commodity for profit to large holders.
Don't fix what's not broken.	Irrigation districts have a system that has been and IS working. Farmer investment into recent expansions speak to that. Focus on economic growth and water security. We need more storage (Eyermore Dam). Increase efficiency through pipelines.
Do not change existing systems - more storage.	Storing and holding water more effectively. do not let so much go downstream.
Licensing system must stay the same. More storage - Belly River has zero storage.	Licensed allocation should be dynamic based on drought conditions, with mandatory cuts for all users.
Protect our only water sources - the east slopes of the Rockies. Allow NO mining!	Do not expand irrigation. We are constantly (as taxpayers) pumping \$\$ and more grants into improvements BUT why always expansion?
Selenium from coal mining bioaccumulates. No coal mines!	I am a landowner "sharing" an aquifer with a deep pocketed CFO. Who at environment stands up to protect the aquifer from abuse?
Do not undermine water security for Ag investment by opening up licences.	Too much voluntary monitoring/reporting. Makes neighbours be the police - increase your enforcement.
No volumetric pricing!	Irrigators and irrigation districts have spent millions to be water efficient.
Don't allow feedlots on riverbanks and on top of large underground streams.	Let's manage our headwaters, Danielle!
Do not reduce water licence to irrigation district.	SSRP Water Quality Management Framework is a good example of an effective management tool. Expand it to tributaries.
Require large users (i.e. industry and agriculture) to use the most efficient methods available.	Our biggest asset is a consistent and secure water licensing system. Let's not mess with it.
Let the irrigation districts to continue to work together and find alternate solutions for water availability without touching <i>Water Act</i> and Gov't interference.	SSRB water management plan is a good example of true community engagement. Implement it.
Why are you considering opening the act? What aspect is not working?	
We need more storage on Belly River.	
Convert more ditches and canals to pipelines.	

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When considering an industry focused economy consider/quantify long-term costs: contamination, transport, failed aquifers.

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Long-term monitoring to establish wetlands is costly.

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No inter-basin transfers, do you really care about ecology?

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Updated instream water objectives that adequately protect aquatic environment.

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## Top priorities for the province

### What do you think should be the top priorities for the province when considering its review of water management policies?

ALSA. Have specific thresholds in regional plans for water protection and priorities for use - household and farmers first.	Storage #1 Priority.
Return Flow. <i>Water Act</i> needs a definition of return flow.	Expand and Increase Storage.
Inter basin transfers. More information on transfers between major watersheds.	No more fresh water for fracking.
Transboundary requirements with BC.	Stop giving water away, we don't need to.
Ability to amend emergency pumping permits (human/livestock).	Regulation. Improve oversight and regulation of water for oil and gas. Should not be regulated by Alberta Energy Regulator.
Shorten timelines for water license approvals.	Recognize Differences for Municipalities. Government must realize that all Municipalities are different and have been motivated by different forces to the base they are at. Potential future savings are not equal.
Grey water use?	Modernization of licensing system and allocation/ use monitoring.
1. Protection of headwaters	Allow RSCs to access grants (ACP) to fund regional collaboration on water use.
2. Action on Auditor General's Report	Support water audits to make better use of water in municipalities.
3. TDL's regulated and monitored	Put a stop to unlicensed business/corporate water usage.
4. Protection of aquatic environment	Water Transfer Holdbacks to the Red Deer River. Use 10% of water transfer holdback from Bow and Oldman and transfer that holdback to the Red Deer River. Increased allocation provides economic potential to Red Deer River basin while maintains environmental benefit to Bow and Oldman.
5. Regulation of gravel crushing in waterways	
TDL Considerations. TDL's must have a consideration of the quality of water lost forever.	
Storage & Reservoir.	
Protect headwaters from logging and off-highway vehicles.	
TDLs for fracking granted by Environment not Alberta Energy Regulator.	

Human Consumption #1 but conflicts with FITFIR.	Implement Auditor General's recommendations re: surface water management and WCCs.
Cumulative impacts assessments re: water, air, land & life of all projects.	Water conservation objectives and regulated release of storage should be more dynamic. Based on snowpack, groundwater, and drought conditions. Right now, those in headwaters are the only ones affected by WCOs.
Shut down gravel pits that operate to sell water to the oil and gas industry.	Southern Alberta's producers' role in the creation of the irrigation districts, agriculture impact on local economy and food security.
G.E. electric water corporation to clean up tailings ponds.	Build more storage in appropriate areas on stream.
Storage.	Water storage on the Belly River.
Development of reservoirs.	Don't assume the current system is broken. Streamline licence transfer system.
Storage and reliable supply.	Do not allow coal mining to ruin our precious water resource and pollute our land!!
Lack of information about groundwater quantity and location for rural users.	Encourage and incentivize improving efficiency and productivity with all sectors.
Consideration of rural municipalities role in planning. LUB Communication, MRCB and AB Ag & Irrigation	More reservoirs.
Balance need for instream flows with human needs. Some streams are unhealthier than others.	Any water saved should be returned to the river. No more irrigation expansion, please, especially if it means plowing native grassland.
Food production.	Put a reservoir on the Belly River.
Extra storage will help with regulating necessary flow in the rivers as well as bridging dry spells for irrigators.	Monitoring and public reporting in a timely manner.
Ensure energy industry is responsible for the contaminants they release and responsibility of clean up regardless of where that company is located.	Eyremore Dam. Increase water storage.
Leave <i>Water Act</i> Alone. Build More Storage. More Pipelines.	

Don't change what is working. More storage. Keep FIT-FIR.	Do not allow coal mines to use and contaminate our water!
Protection of the headwaters on the Oldman River.	Water supply = East Slopes rain + snow. - Legally required flow throughs. Protect our limited supply from anything with negative effects on quality or quantity (mines, clearcuts, agriculture practices).
More storage in stream and off stream.	
Storage.	Improve water license transfer process. Water transfers work!
Protecting "our" watersheds off the mountains!!	No contamination of water we do have - we need Oldman River healthy.
More onstream storage.	
Building of more storage faster so more water for all - surely process can be sped up.	NO to coal mine on Grassy Mountain.
More and better funding for irrigation equipment.	Maintaining / restoring natural water storage in headwaters (e.g., less clearcut logging).
CREDIT towns with 60% of return flow.	No interbasin transfers.
<i>Water Act</i> has tools to get water moved. Use it.	Protect not only quantity of H2O but QUALITY of river H2O. Coal proposal threatens river health.
More pipelines!!	Let's look after water we do have.
Do not allow coal mining to ruin our precious resource!	More storage.
Realize that diversion to irrigation appears to cost taxpayers twice. And supports non sustainable crop management like CRO model that demands more of the ecosystem than it can support generationally over centuries.	Food production. Water security. Municipal water allocation.
There is only one water source, and East Slopes. They must be protected. Dams = increased evaporation. Stop clearcuts. Refuse mines. Encourage nature-based solutions.	More storage sooner than later. Later storage is more expensive!
Ditto to the protection of the headwaters / Eastern slopes.	More water storage to mitigate wet and dry seasons. Keep irrigation as is!
	Building storage. Importance of water to the economy of southern Alberta.
	Build more reservoirs on the Oldman River.

Development of Reservoirs.
Water security for Agriculture and Irrigation.
Protecting the water we do have, long term planning, not putting profit over people.
Protecting water sources from contamination.
Reduce the water use for lawn (or not using water for grass).
Reduce all contaminants - wind blown and effluent.
Eliminate clear cutting in mountains, manage run-off.
Utilize grey water.
Investment in green industry.
Protection of ground water and source water.
Rely on proven technology that actually exists.
Establishment of water quality and quantity thresholds & limits that are protective of S.35 rights and precautionary principle.
Alternatives to Dams, ice jams needed for refresh.
The proposed changes do not help for business certainty.
Read the reports before relying on and trusting the science.

Water infrastructure operations consider fish/ aquatic environment and shifts from precipitation patterns due to climate change.
Strengthen protective legislation. UCP should be responsive to concerns for the future of water. Strengthen protective legislation instead of planning to sell-off mineral resources at the expense of limited water supply.

## Technologies and innovations

### What technologies or innovations could help improve water availability in Alberta?

A readily available grey water system to put dishwater into toilets.

Incentives for decreased water use, such as nontraditional lawns, low flow toilets, shower faucets.

It seems to work for irrigators. They get a lot of money from taxpayers. But it isn't working for the river and aquatic life.

Do not change the *Water Act*.

More pipelines.

Better Infrastructure.

Southern Alberta water supplies come from the East Slopes and only East Slopes. They must be protected from activities with negative impacts on water amounts, flows, etc.

More education for those who do not use or understand how efficient and productive irrigation systems are.

Use water use reporting in DRAS and put in meters - meter pumps.

Improve and expedite water storage options on and off stream.

Protect the landscape where WATER comes from! Stop the clear cuts in Alberta's headwaters.

Metering and enforcement may be annoying, but if we have two 2023 years in a row, users will wish we had it!

No more dams. Think bigger and smarter.

More and bigger dams.

Increase storage.

Our headwaters are too important to our agriculture to allow open pit mining.

Stop the Grassy Mountain coal mine. Selenium accumulates in the soil, the body etc. If it deforms fish, what will it do to human fetus.

Remote water utilization monitoring and reporting.

Don't allow open pit mining in the headwaters of the Oldman River.

Simplify licence transfers.

Conservation!!

Catch more off stream (storage). Pipelines.

Prioritize agriculture and human consumption over industrial use.

Expansion and creation of select reservoirs (not dead horse) - on stream reservoirs.

In stream storage on river basins.

Must have more dams and storage. Belly river - good option.

More environment staff working on approvals to speed up process to build storage reservoirs.

How much H2O is Grassy Mountain going to use for coal mining?	Protect water quality and quantity. Irrigators - say no to coal.
Not allowing coal mining as it uses lots of water and pollutes it with selenium.	Water Storage. Expedite the environmental process to get it done.
Why is H2O not treated in a royalty regime as other natural resources?	Improve wastewater treatment. Less water will be used for dilution.
More storage! More Pipelines!	Stormwater treatment standards and better monitoring.
Reduce red tape associated with environmental assessments in order to bring more water storage projects online faster. The current EA system is broken.	
No to volumetric pricing schemes (same as a carbon tax).	
No more water storage. Leave the rivers and headwaters alone. no more irrigation expansion.	
We're told that we over supply our downriver obligations by 9%... save that 9% and allocate it to your 'pipedreams'.	
We need more reservoirs. Water storage.	
Do not allow coal mining to drain our precious water resources and pollute our air, water and land.	
Better metering of rivers and streams.	
Water is a public good. If it is used for private gain, the user MUST pay a fair market price (yes to volumetric pricing).	
Water is life in the south. Don't mess with our economic engine!	