

South Saskatchewan River Basin

Water Management Plan



OVERVIEW

Alberta Environment is leading the development of a water management plan to maximize the benefits of water use in the South Saskatchewan River Basin (SSRB) in a sustainable and environmentally responsible way.

While respecting all existing water allocation licences in good standing, the plan will resolve water management issues, including the availability of water for future allocations and river flows for the aquatic environment. The plan is being completed in a phased approach, involving consultation with four multi-sector stakeholder basin advisory committees and the general public.

Once completed, this will be Alberta's first water management plan under the *Water Act*.

Phase One – Water Allocation Transfers

Phase One of the water management plan – approved in June 2002 – authorizes water allocation transfers within the SSRB, subject to Alberta Environment approval and conditions. New water applications will not be accepted for the St. Mary, Belly and Waterton Rivers, pending recommendations from Phase Two of the plan.

Phase Two – Finding the Balance Between Water Consumption and Environmental Protection in the SSRB

The key goal of the second phase, scheduled for completion in early 2004, is find the balance between water consumption and environmental protection in the SSRB. This will include defining water conservation objectives (i.e. the flow to remain in rivers) after consideration of economic and social values, and ecological requirements. Studies either completed or underway identify:

- status of water allocations
- current status of the aquatic environment, and river flows required for protecting the aquatic environment
- estimates of future human demands for water
- sub-basin flow contributions to the Master Agreement on Apportionment

Additional Phases

The need for additional phases and other water management planning priorities will be reviewed during Phase Two.

Relationship with Alberta's Water for Life Strategy

A draft of Alberta's water strategy was released for public and stakeholder discussion on March 27, 2003. One of the key recommendations in the draft strategy is to take a watershed approach to water management and planning. This recommendation supports the South Saskatchewan River Water Management planning program and approach.

The finalized *Water for Life* strategy, scheduled for release in Fall 2003, will identify comprehensive short-, medium- and long-term plans to effectively manage the quantity and quality of Alberta's water systems and supply.

The South Saskatchewan River Basin includes the sub-basins of:

- Red Deer River
- Bow River
- Oldman River (including the South Saskatchewan)

The planning process is a combined effort of:

- Alberta Environment
- Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
- Alberta Sustainable Resource Development

Fisheries and Oceans Canada is on the project steering committee

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South Saskatchewan River Basin water management plan Web site:

www.gov.ab.ca/env/water/regions/ssrb

Water for Life Web site:
www.waterforlife.gov.ab.ca



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