

November 19, 2008

Looking back – Water for Life 2003-2008 achievements

After five years of implementation, there is much to celebrate. A number of key achievements are outlined below. Please visit the *Water for Life* website (www.waterforlife.alberta.ca) for further information on each of the goals and key directions.

Safe, secure drinking water

- Key action: Complete an assessment of all drinking water facilities in Alberta.
 - A comprehensive review of Alberta's [water treatment facilities](#) (2004) identified infrastructure funding priorities to ensure the health and safety of drinking water.
- Key action: Establish a public awareness and education program to ensure Albertans have easy access to water resource information and services.
 - [Drinking water information](#) is now online.
- Key action: Establish an independent, on-going review process, on a five-year cycle, for Alberta's drinking water program.
 - An independent [technical review of the province's drinking water program](#) is done every five years.
- Key action: Establish emergency protocols, including support staff and laboratory capacity, to protect Albertans from contaminants in drinking water.
 - [Emergency response protocols](#) reduce the risk from incidents that can arise from unforeseen circumstances, like equipment failure or extreme weather events.
- Key action: Provide Albertans with access to online reporting of all drinking water facility test sample results.
 - [Drinking water facility test sample results](#) are now available online (2007).

Reliable, quality water supplies

- Key action: Establish water conservation objectives for the South Saskatchewan River Basin.
 - Government approved the [South Saskatchewan River Basin Water Management Plan](#) (2007).
- Key action: Monitor, evaluate and report on the water allocation transfer system.
 - Alberta Environment enhanced its internal Environmental Management System to include water transfer records, to facilitate a water transfer system in the South Saskatchewan River Basin.
- Key action: Evaluate, as part of the watershed planning process, water management infrastructure needs.
 - Government assessed current infrastructure needs to ensure water management structures are maintained properly.
 - Government completed a [2005 inventory](#) and [2008 assessment](#) of potential water storage sites that will inform future basin planning.

Healthy, aquatic ecosystems

- Key action: Complete an initial assessment of the status of aquatic ecosystem, including lakes, wetlands, streams and rivers. Complete an assessment of Alberta's surface water quality.
 - In a status assessment of Alberta's aquatic ecosystems, these two actions were combined.
 - The [Scope of Work for the Initial Assessment of Aquatic Ecosystem Health in Alberta](#) and [Information synthesis and initial assessment of the status and health of aquatic ecosystems in Alberta: surface water quality, sediment quality and non-fish biota Report](#) helped lay the foundation for healthy aquatic ecosystem work.
 - The [Aquatic Ecosystems – Review of Issues and Monitoring Techniques](#) helped define healthy aquatic ecosystems.

Research and knowledge

- Key action: Establish a public awareness and education program.
 - The Water Education Framework was established in 2006 and initiated water awareness campaigns.
- Key action: Develop a provincial water research plan.
 - The Alberta Science Research Authority released its report on [priority areas for water research needs](#) (2006).
- Key action: Establish a provincial, multi-disciplinary water research centre.
 - Alberta Ingenuity's [Alberta Water Research Institute](#) (2007) coordinates world class and leading-edge research to support *Water for Life*.
- Key action: Establish a provincial water information centre.
 - The Alberta [water information centre](#) consolidates and delivers specific water information to users.
- Key action: Update water quality programs to support watershed protection and planning.
 - All water quality data is now available through the [Water Database System](#) (2006).

Partnerships

- Key action: Establish a provincial water advisory council.
 - The [Alberta Water Council](#) (2004) monitors and stewards implementation of *Water for Life* and champions achievement of the strategy's three goals.
- Key action: Complete a partnership framework, outlining the roles, responsibilities and relationships between government and its partners.
 - A [partnership framework](#) (2005) outlines roles and responsibilities to help implement *Water for Life* goals.
- Key action: Establish watershed planning and advisory councils.
 - [Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils](#) (WPACs) assess their watershed's state and develop a plan to address issues. Nine watersheds have organizations formally recognized as WPACs.
- Key action: Support watershed stewardship groups to improve the condition of local watersheds.
 - Government supports watershed stewardship groups through the [Alberta Stewardship Network](#) stewardship grant program.

Conservation

- Key action: Establish a public awareness and education program on water conservation in Alberta.
 - To improve Albertans' knowledge of water conservation, several education projects have been undertaken including online [conservation information](#) (2005).
- Key action: Prepare water conservation and productivity plans for all water using sectors.
 - The Alberta Water Council released [Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity: Principles, Definitions, Performance Measures and Environmental Indicators Report](#) (2007).
 - Two reports on water use in the oil and gas sector were released, providing [policy](#) and [guidelines](#) (2007) for oilfield injection.
- Key action: Establish a system to monitor and report actual water use by all sectors on an on-going basis.
 - Government established a voluntary [water use reporting system](#) (2006) for licence holders to submit water use data.

Media inquiries may be directed to:

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Looking forward – highlights of the renewed *Water for Life* strategy

Safe, secure drinking water actions

- Review and improve the management of small drinking water systems that are currently unregulated;
- Develop innovative approaches to build and assure long-term operational capacity in smaller Alberta communities;
- Design and implement regional drinking water and waste water solutions; and
- Continue to work cooperatively with First Nations, Métis communities and federal government to ensure safe drinking water in Aboriginal communities in Alberta.

Reliable, quality water supplies actions

- Develop and implement an enhanced surface water rights transfer system that supports sustainable economic development; and
- Develop and implement a viable governance system that supports sustainable management of water.

Healthy, aquatic ecosystems actions

- Develop a provincial action plan to improve the health of significantly impacted aquatic ecosystems;
- Set water conservation objectives on all major basins; and
- Finalize and implement a new wetland policy for Alberta.

Research and knowledge actions

- Enhance the provincial water monitoring and evaluation program including information on wetlands, groundwater, aquatic health, water quality, drinking water and water supply; and
- Enhance the Alberta water information centre to provide a web-based public information centre to report on the status of Alberta's water resources.

Partnerships actions

- Continue to resource and support *Water for Life* partnerships; and
- Continue to develop and improve watershed management knowledge, tools and programs.

Conservation actions

- Complete an evaluation and make recommendations on the merit of economic instruments to meet water conservation and productivity objectives; and
- Encourage all sectors to develop and implement sector plans for water conservation, efficiency and productivity.

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