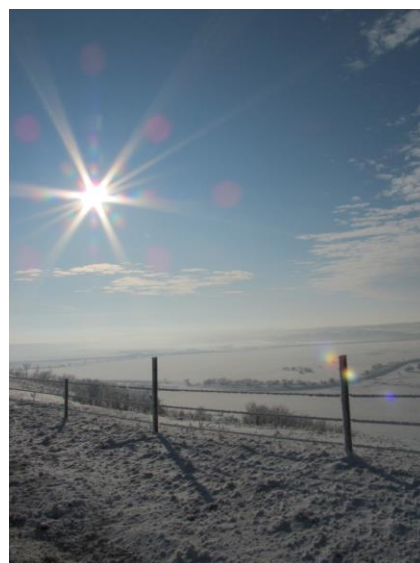


# highlights

APPROVED WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN  
FOR THE BATTLE RIVER BASIN (ALBERTA)



Alberta

Environment and Sustainable  
Resource Development

This plan reflects a balance between protecting the aquatic environment and providing an adequate supply of water to support the needs of the economy and the social fabric of communities in the Battle River Basin.

This water management plan is a practical example of the watershed planning approach described in Alberta's *Water for Life* strategy.

Over the past several years, people from a wide variety of sectors participated on a stakeholder advisory committee, where they were asked for their views on the direction water management should take in the Battle River Basin (BRB). Their comments and concerns were carefully considered in the preparation of this plan.

The water management plan for the BRB is critically important at this point in time. It defines how water should be utilized, now and into the future. It brings clarity to questions that have been posed for many years. The aquatic environment of the Battle River has a demonstrated need for protection, while the communities and economy of east central Alberta depend on water for the long term sustainability of the region. A growing population and economy are putting increased pressures on water resources, aquatic environments, and the security of existing allocations in the BRB. The intent of this plan is to accelerate steps that citizens and decision makers of the BRB have already taken on the path towards vibrant communities and a sustainable economy and environment.

Once approved, the plan will provide water management guidance to decision makers and act as a foundation for future watershed management planning in the BRB by the regional Watershed Planning and Advisory Council, as well as stewardship groups. Strong linkages between water quality, land use and water quantity may now be further pursued. Improved cooperation between all stakeholders is expected and encouraged to occur.

The plan recognizes and accepts that we are approaching the limits for water allocations in the Battle River Basin.

## Principal Recommendations

The principal recommendations contained in this plan are:

- A water allocation limit will be set at 57,500 dam<sup>3</sup> of licenced water use. Once this limit has been reached, Alberta Environment will no longer accept applications for new water licences;
- The Director is authorized to consider applications for transfers of water allocations immediately to provide options for those requiring greater water security to meet their business needs;
  - Water Conservation Holdbacks: The Director is authorized to withhold up to 10% of the volume of water being transferred, if withholding that water is considered to be in the public interest to protect the aquatic environment or to implement a Water Conservation Objective.
  - It is recommended that the maximum of 10% be withheld, and that this water be secured through either a Water Conservation Objective licence (with the priority of the original licence) or a crown reservation in order to support the intended purpose of protection of the aquatic ecosystem.
- A Water Conservation Objective will be set as a rate of flow that is 85% of the natural flow that is to be left in the watercourse; and during those times when natural flow approaches the lowest quintile (20%), flow reductions shall be applied based on the greater of either:
  - a) 15% instantaneous reduction from natural flow or;
  - b) The lesser of either the natural flow or the 80% exceedance natural flow based on available time step data.
    - It is recommended that this WCO be applied to new (junior) licences stemming from applications received on or after January 1, 2005.
- The Director must consider the Matters and Factors provided in this plan in making decisions on applications for licences, preliminary certificates, approvals, or transfers of an allocation of water.

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A Water Conservation Objective (WCO) is the amount and quality of water necessary for the protection of a natural water body or its aquatic ecosystem. It may also include water necessary to maintain a rate of flow or water level requirements.

Licences subject to the WCO are not permitted to withdraw water when the rate of flow defined in the WCO is not met.

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## Other Recommendations

This plan also provides guidance for the management of riparian areas, voluntary flow restrictions during water shortage periods, and the development of site specific water quality objectives.

## Next Steps

The achievement of the recommended options and strategies contained in this plan will require improved co-operation between all stakeholders. Moreover, the guidance of the designated Watershed Planning and Advisory Council for the Battle River watershed, as well as stewardship groups working in the basin, is essential to the long term success of the non-regulatory aspects of this plan. The Watershed Planning and Advisory Council is encouraged to consider the priorities of this plan in their watershed and undertake future watershed management planning with this water management plan serving as a foundation. Collaboration between the Watershed Planning and Advisory Council and watershed residents, stakeholders and decision-makers is essential to the success of watershed management planning in the BRB.

The Approved Water Management Plan for the Battle River Basin is the senior plan within the BRB, and all other water management plans in the BRB are to be consistent with it. It is recognized that improvements to the plan may be made as research results and other data becomes available.

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The intent of this plan is to improve the overall health of the aquatic environment while supporting a sustainable economy and vibrant communities.

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### MORE INFORMATION:

For more information, or to read the entire Battle River Basin Water Management Plan, visit [www.battleriverwatershed.ca/WMP-phase-1](http://www.battleriverwatershed.ca/WMP-phase-1) or call (780) 672 0276.