



<b>Title:</b>	<b>Inter-basin Transfer Information Letter</b>
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## Clarification of the Inter-basin Transfer Requirement Relative to the Reuse of Treated Municipal or Industrial Wastewater

### Purpose

The purpose of the Inter-basin Transfer Information letter is to provide clarification regarding the *Water Act* requirement for a transfer between major river basins relative to a water reuse scheme authorized under the *Environmental Enhancement and Protection Act* (EPEA).

### Scope

The scope of this Inter-basin Transfer Information Letter includes but is not limited to treated municipal and/or treated industrial wastewater reuse scenarios where:

- The treated wastewater generator and the user of the treated wastewater are in different major river basins as defined in the *Water Act*;
- The wastewater user is disposing of the treated wastewater after its reuse, and not returning it to the watershed;
- The wastewater reuse is authorized in the form of two Letters of Authorization under Section 9.1 *Alberta Wastewater and Storm Drainage Regulation* (EPEA). (Specific direction on this authorization process can be found in *Interim Guidance to Authorize Reuse of Municipal and Industrial Wastewater*); and

If any of these conditions are not true this Information Letter may not be applicable.

### Background

The *Water Act* requirement for a special Act for a transfer between major river basins is triggered by a diversion of water for which a *Water Act* licence would be required. The interim treated wastewater reuse policy provides guidance on specific circumstances where water licence amendments may be appropriate, but does not recommend any new water authorizations be required unless a Director identifies a specific need or circumstance.

The Alberta Environment and Parks interim policy for the reuse of treated wastewater is that treated wastewater will be authorized principally under the *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*, using a Letter of Authorization issued to the wastewater producer as well as to the recipient/user, with explicit conditions of use for the wastewater. The interim policy contemplates that the treated wastewater that is reused will not be returned to the watershed but disposed of instead. As such an inter-basin transfer is not triggered.

Directors must be mindful of the intent, concerns and sensitivities that caused a special provision around inter-basin transfers to be written into the *Water Act*. The justification for a higher level of scrutiny applied to authorizations in cases of inter-basin transfers stems mainly from three major principles:

- Quantity – No licences to transfer water outside Canada (*Water Act*, s. 46) as well as principles of environmental sustainability; no compelling authority to move significant quantities of water amongst basins, or from lesser-allocated areas to fully-allocated areas
- Ecological integrity and water quality – Species (fisheries, bugs, microbes, or vegetation) or water quality constituents (biological or chemical parameters) should not be transferred amongst different aquatic ecosystems
- Trans-boundary water management implications – The diversion of water between river basins within Alberta may, as a consequence, alter the amount of water that is expected to be received by downstream jurisdiction(s), which may or may not be subject to a formal agreement

## Enquiries

Enquiries on this Inter-basin Transfer Information Letter should be addressed to the Surface Water Policy Section, Water Policy Branch, Alberta Environment and Parks.

Original signed by: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Water Policy  
Alberta Environment and Parks

Date: August 25, 2015