

# Water for Life

## FACTS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

*Water for Life* is the overarching government-wide strategy for water in Alberta. Whether concerns involve conservation measures, quality controls for safe drinking water, irrigation, or the conservation of aquatic ecosystems, the *Water for Life* strategy guides policy measures across Government of Alberta ministries.

The *Water for Life* strategy was the first of its kind in North America and remains one of the most comprehensive water strategies for a large geographic area.

### How was *Water for Life* developed?

A multi-year drought at the turn of the millennium increased concerns about the future of water management in Alberta. In response, the Government of Alberta undertook extensive public and stakeholder consultation to identify the water-related issues most concerning Albertans. *Water for Life* was released in 2003 - the result of those discussions.

### What are the main components?

The *Water for Life* strategy has three main goals:

- **Safe, secure drinking water** - As part of the commitment to ensure safe drinking water, the Government of Alberta has committed more than \$400 million for the construction of sustainable regional drinking water and wastewater systems.
- **Healthy aquatic ecosystems** - The maintenance of healthy aquatic ecosystems are essential to sustain the sources of Alberta's water for future generations. Collecting information and developing decision support tools and models will help improve understanding and management of aquatic ecosystems.
- **Reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy** - Water is a finite resource - we cannot make more of it. This means, in the future we must use water more efficiently than we ever have before.

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And three key directions:

- **Knowledge and research** - Improving scientific understanding and informing interested parties will help them make effective policy and water management decisions.
- **Partnerships** - Citizens, communities, industries, and government must share the responsibility for the wise use and sustainability of water in Alberta. Major partners include the Alberta Water Council, watershed planning and advisory councils, and watershed stewardship groups.
- **Water conservation** - Albertans must understand that water is a scarce resource and that we all have a responsibility to conserve. This will occur through demonstrating best management practices and developing plans to work towards improved conservation, efficiency, and productivity.

### 2008 renewal of *Water for Life*

The Alberta Water Council reviewed *Water for Life* and confirmed that its goals and directions remain valid. The renewed strategy was approved by Cabinet and released in November 2008. The *Water for Life* renewal accelerates action to safeguard our water resources, ensuring the integration of watershed planning with Land-use Framework regional planning and the cumulative effects management approach. The strategy outlines the need to take action on a number of fronts including:

- Regional drinking water and wastewater solutions;
- Aquatic ecosystem health;
- Water monitoring, evaluation and public reporting; and,
- A viable governance system that supports sustainable water management.

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The strategy was renewed by the Government of Alberta in 2008