

Terms of Reference

Intrabasin Water Coordinating Committee

for the

South Saskatchewan River Basin

13 June 2007
(revised 12 March 2008)

Terms of Reference for SSRB Intrabasin Water Coordinating Committee

Overview

The Approved Water Management Plan for the South Saskatchewan River Basin (Alberta) (Order-In-Council 409/2006) calls for the creation of an Interbasin* Water Coordinating Committee (IWCC). As stated in the plan (p. 10, Alberta Environment 2006):

To promote coordination between the sub-basins on matters of common interest, an Interbasin Water Coordinating Committee will be established. It will have representation from the Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils in the SSRB and from the South Saskatchewan River Sub-basin. Alberta Environment will also have membership.

This committee will provide advice to Alberta Environment on managing water during periods of water shortage in any or all of the sub-basins. This committee is to meet at least annually or on as frequent a basis as necessary to review and address matters regarding water shortage situations and how to best meet the requirements of the Master Agreement on Apportionment. The Director will make any applicable decisions.

The committee will be the main source of advice to Alberta Environment (AENV) concerning actions that should be taken to ensure the *Master Agreement on Apportionment* (MAA) is met. The MAA governs the quantity, rate of flow and quality of water that Alberta must pass on to Saskatchewan.

The four sub-basins of the South Saskatchewan River Basin (SSRB) are those of the Red Deer, Bow, Oldman and South Saskatchewan Rivers (see Map 1).

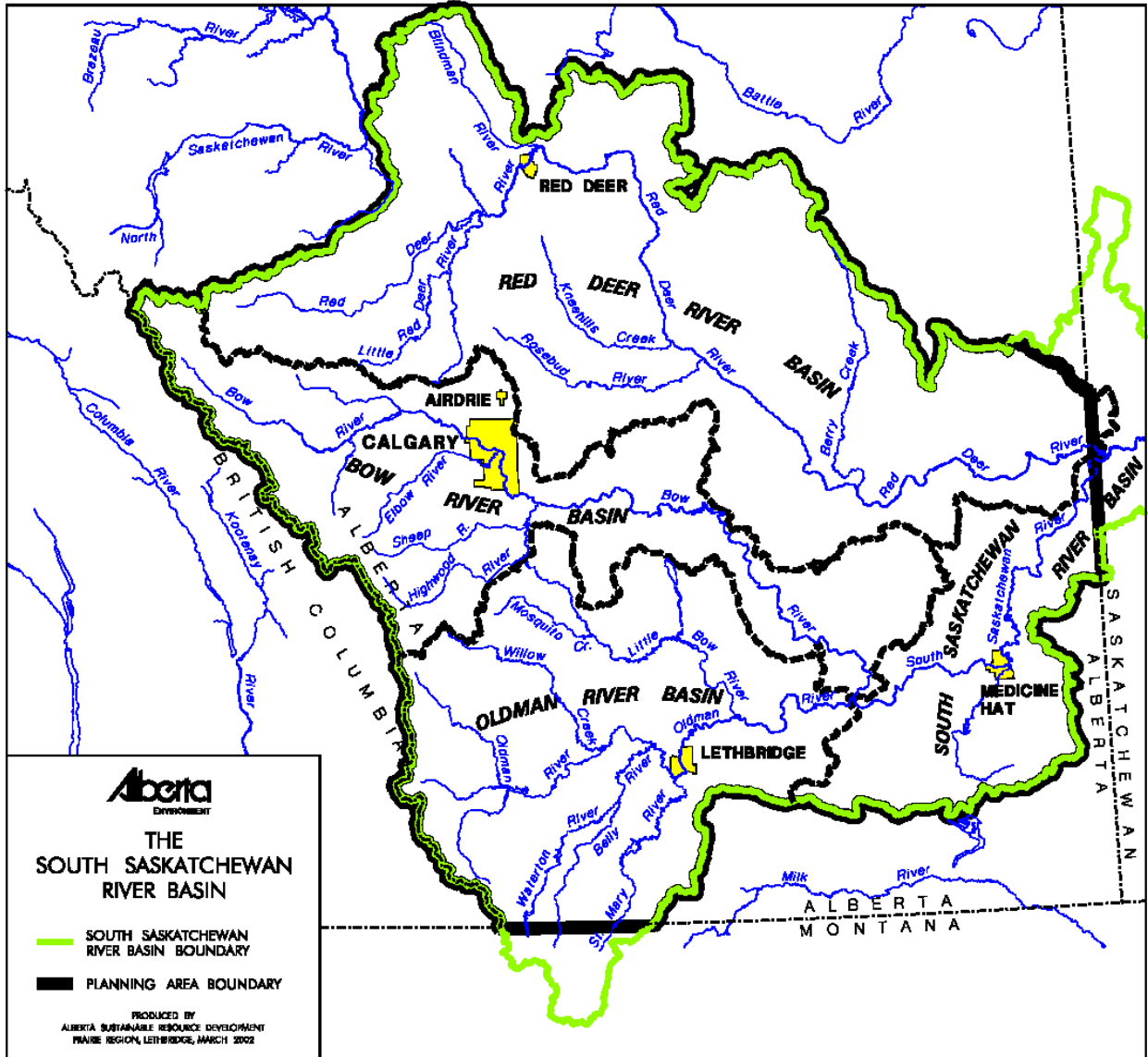
The plan calls for preparation of an apportionment operations plan to identify criteria for decisions on how Alberta will meet its obligations to Saskatchewan for flows from the SSRB.

Background

The SSRB is managed by AENV as a single unit for purposes of meeting the requirements of the *Master Agreement on Apportionment*. This permits flexibility in drawing on the sub-basins in response to annual variations in water supply and demand.

To date, Alberta has been able to meet apportionment with little special effort other than in 1988 and 2001. However, this is expected to change in the future as the result of existing allocations being utilized more completely, allocations to First Nations and new allocations in the Red Deer River sub-basin.

* The committee's name has subsequently been revised to become the Intrabasin Water Coordinating Committee to avoid confusion around the word "interbasin." In Alberta this word has come to usually mean some connection between any of the seven major basins identified in the *Water Act*.



Map 1 The South Saskatchewan River Basin

- The parts of the basin that lie in Montana and Saskatchewan are not in the water management plan area.
- The water management plan applies to all projects that use water diverted within the SSRB.

Purpose of IWCC

The overarching purpose of the IWCC is to have in place a committee of respected individuals representing the SSRB Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils¹ (WPACs) who will be capable of providing to Alberta Environment advice as to how best meet the MAA under any particular set of circumstances. These individuals will have a good understanding of the MAA, SSRB water management opportunities and limitations, and the water supply and demand situation at any point in time.

- The committee shall prepare and maintain an apportionment operations plan to guide water management for purposes of meeting the requirements of the MAA.
- The committee shall provide to AENV water managers on-going situational advice as needed, for meeting the requirements of the MAA in unusual conditions.
- The committee may provide a coordination function for the WPACs within the SSRB for water operational and administration matters of common interest to the WPACs.

Key Tasks

- Prepare an apportionment operations plan.
- Provide advice to AENV as requested during the course of the year on how to best meet apportionment during water shortages in any or all sub-basins, bearing in mind legal and physical constraints and possibilities.
- During periods of water shortage, provide regular communication to the public and water users about the situation, and recommendations and decisions.
- Provide oversight for preparation by AENV of an annual report to the public concerning apportionment. This report would generally be prepared after February, when all data for the preceding season is available.
- Prepare a communications plan, which should include annual and operational reports, as well as communications during shortages.
- The communications provided are to be in plain English and user-friendly.
- Provide to AENV on-going review of information and performance.
- Review normal operations plans for dams, weirs and diversions and, if considered necessary, make recommendations on possible changes.

Guiding Principles

- The Approved Water Management Plan for the SSRB provides the guiding principles for the committee, particularly the following sections, which are quoted from the plan (pp. 10-11, Alberta Environment 2006):
 - *All of the sub-basins of the SSRB will continue to be managed as a single entity in order to meet the requirements of the Master Agreement on Apportionment.*
 - *An apportionment operations plan be developed to identify criteria for decisions how Alberta will meet its flow obligations to Saskatchewan. A key principle is to achieve fair and equitable sharing of water between the*

¹ Red Deer River Watershed Alliance, Bow River Basin Council, Oldman Watershed Council, South East Alberta Watershed Alliance

sub-basins, such that during times of shortage the licence holders of one sub-basin do not carry an excessive burden for the benefit of licence holders in other sub-basins.

- *It is recognized that in strict legal terms, a senior licence could call priority in one sub-basin, but because of insufficient junior licences, insufficient water storage, and apportionment issues in that sub-basin, this could result in a more junior licence in another sub-basin being negatively affected. However, the likelihood of this occurring is very remote, as other options, such as calling on stored water in the Oldman River Dam reservoir, will usually be available. With some foresight, the committee should easily be able to avoid a strict priority situation.*
- *The principle of sharing water during shortages should take precedence, so licences in the water-short basin(s) are affected first. The proportion of contribution should consider the following in each sub-basin:*
 - › *Amount of storage capacity and amount of water in storage*
 - › *Location of storage*
 - › *Snow pack*
 - › *Volume of licences affected*
 - › *Sub-basin natural flows.*
- *The Alberta Government will consider the advice of the IWCC to meet apportionment obligations under the Master Agreement on Apportionment.*
- *The public should be provided with information on a regular basis as to the committee's recommendations. AENV should submit an annual report to the public on its activities with respect to meeting apportionment.*

Constraints

- The *Water Act* of Alberta and related regulations
- The terms of the MAA (administered by the Prairie Provinces Water Board)
- The policies and direction provided by *Water For Life, Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability*, particularly those pertaining to water conservation standards.
- Licences and associated operations plans for dams, weirs and reservoirs.

Duration

- The IWCC is anticipated to be an on-going committee.

Committee Operations

- The committee will strive to reach consensus on its recommendations to AENV.
- If consensus cannot be achieved, then the committee will provide to AENV the majority and minority opinions and their rationale.
- AENV will send any matters requiring a recommendation from the IWCC at least one week prior to the meeting at which the matter is to be considered.
- Quorum will be reached if one representative from each of the WPACs is in attendance.
- Until the committee decides otherwise, the meetings will be chaired by Dave McGee, AENV.

- While the Apportionment Operations Plan is being prepared, the committee will strive to meet monthly. After the plan is in place, the committee will meet at least three times per year. This will include a meeting in the spring to consider the water supply and demand situation and possible actions that may be required to meet apportionment. A meeting will also be held in the fall to review the year's operations. The committee may be requested to meet more frequently in years when special management is required to meet apportionment.
- Members or alternates are expected to attend meetings in person, unless there are extenuating circumstances. This is to help achieve the best possible communication and understanding.
- Guests may attend meetings as observers if there are no objections from committee members, on a case-by-case basis. Requests to have a guest attend must be sent the recording secretary, who will forward the request to the membership, along with the agenda. Guests may speak if permission is requested and received from the Chair. The committee may hold parts of meetings at which guests are present *in camera*.

Membership

- Each of the four WPACs in the SSRB can send up to three representatives. The Councils can determine alternates who can attend IWCC meetings in the event of a member being unavailable.
- Each of the WPACs will set the terms for their respective representatives.
- AENV can send up to three representatives to assist the committee and to receive advice. The AENV representatives will be non-voting.

Roles/Responsibilities

- The WPAC representatives are to communicate with the membership and boards of their WPAC to ensure the views and interests of their WPAC are conveyed to the IWCC.
- The representatives from AENV are to provide information to the committee and to hear and receive advice.
- AENV will provide secretariat services including all logistical, organizing, and administrative services required.
- AENV will make resource staff available as required, particularly for modeling assistance.

Administrative Matters

- Locations and frequency of meetings to be determined on an on-going basis.
- It is anticipated that much business can be conducted by conference calls and e-mail.
- If any individual member so requests, AENV will reimburse that member for reasonable expenses incurred in attending committee meetings. This will ordinarily be limited to mileage and meals.

References

Alberta Environment. 2006. Approved Water Management Plan for the South Saskatchewan River Basin (Alberta). Edmonton, Alberta.