

Cold Lake – Beaver River Basin Water Management Plan (2007)

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. Can the basin meet the existing water use demands of all users (i.e. municipal, agricultural, industrial)?**

Answer: Yes. Allocated water use in the basin is less than 5 per cent of the average annual flows that leaves the basin. This is considered to be a very healthy number and is sustainable.

- 2. Does the updated water management plan cover the entire Cold Lake – Beaver River Basin?**

Answer: The updated (2006) plan covers the lower portion of the basin, this is consistent with the original (1985) plan. A Watershed Planning and Advisory Council (WPAC) is being established in the area; one of its first objectives is to expand the management plan to include the upper portion of the basin.

- 3. Will new applications for water licences (i.e. withdrawals) be considered?**

Answer: Yes. Applications for water withdrawals will be considered by Alberta Environment on a site by site and case by case basis. The management plan is consistent with recent government initiatives and policies that encourage the use of alternatives to fresh water for certain industrial activities (e.g. *Conservation and Allocation Policy for Oilfield Injection*). It also requires that water licence applications for long-term water use describe the possible influences and interactions with other water sources and users.

- 4. Why is a pipeline from the North Saskatchewan River to the Cold Lake – Beaver River Basin no longer required?**

Answer: The pipeline was planned to supply freshwater for industrial use. The projections for industrial freshwater use forecasted in the 1985 plan were high. Steam injection operations are more efficient and use alternatives to fresh water, decreasing the reliance on the basin. The basin is able to meet existing water use demands without the support of a pipeline.

- 5. What are the main differences between the updated (2006) water management plan and the previous (1985) plan?**

Answer: The previous plan focused primarily on water allocations and licensing. The updated plan has a larger scope, including a focus on a watershed management by considering other activities that effect water quantity and quality. It focuses on a

collaborative approach among agencies that have authority to manage activities that can affect watershed. The plan also focuses on meeting water use demands within the capacity of the basin and recognizing the interconnectivity of groundwater and surface water.

6. How does the updated plan protect aquatic resources?

Answer: The updated plan provides recommendations for the protection of the Cold Lake- Beaver River Basin. Specific recommendations include a moratorium for withdrawals on certain lakes (May, Muriel, Manatoka, Reita, and Tucker) in order to maintain water levels for aquatic habitat, recreation and other non-consumptive uses. It also protects an important fisheries spawning habitat in Cold Lake by providing a cut off for industrial water withdrawals.