

Issue Prioritization of the Manitoba Eco-Network in regards to watershed planning

(Note that these are listed roughly chronologically, as they are of equal import)

1. PLANNING PROCESS

Gather and provide access to reliable data on water use, including the volume of withdrawals (both licensed and actual amounts), the timing and purpose of use and the quality of water returned to the environment. Link the planning process with other relevant local planning processes. Ensure adequate participation in planning processes by providing financial assistance to NGOs, including compensation for time and travel expenses as well as funding to capacity-build among the public. Identify and put in place strategies to overcome barriers/disincentives to First Nations participation, recognizing the value of what an Aboriginal perspective has to offer a planning process, the rights of First Nations in regards to water, and the water concerns involved. Provide speakers to the planning group on applicable watershed and development planning processes that require integration, an overview of the threats/possible solutions to water quality and quantity in the area, and progressive examples of planning models, conservation strategy and stewardship tools from other regions.

2. PRECAUTIONARY APPROACH, ECOSYSTEM NEEDS, ECOLOGICAL GOODS AND SERVICES VALUATION and LANDOWNER COMPENSATION

Prioritize ecosystem and basic human needs over economic activity by establishing a sustainability boundary ensuring that water demand does not exceed capacity. In the absence of sufficient data, implement a precautionary approach favouring environmental needs. Recognize ecosystems as legitimate water users with specific requirements for soil quality and water quality, quantity and timing to maintain their health, integrity and productivity. Recognize the value of ecological services such as carbon sequestration, erosion control, purification of water and air, water retention and maintenance of biodiversity, and incorporate landowner compensation planning for restoration and maintenance of ecological areas and for use of best management practises. Provide speaker to the group on ecological goods and services valuation and manifestation of concept in groundwater planning.

3. DRINKING WATER

Prioritize ecosystem and human health over economic activity by implementing a multi-barrier approach, which counters threats to water all the way from watershed landscapes to the household tap, including source water protection (Gather and provide information on particularly sensitive areas,

including recharge/discharge areas, groundwater-reliant surface water, areas of thin overburden, or highly penetrable soils/rock formation, threats to surface water sources etc.), adequate treatment, well maintained distribution systems, strong water quality standards, regular inspection, testing, monitoring, operator training and certification, public notice, public reporting and

involvement, contingency planning, research, adequate funding and rigorous enforcement. Provide speaker to the group on how the multi-barrier approach can be incorporated into groundwater planning.

4. CONSERVATION, TECHNOLOGY and ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

Prioritize conservation over supply expansion by maximizing the productivity of existing infrastructure and water takings through integrating water efficient technologies, conservation-oriented water fees, and public education. For example, in key industries such as the agricultural sector and hydro, funding currently directed at expanding infrastructure such as dams and pipelines should be shifted to finance studies and implementation of innovative demand management techniques such as energy conservation, water scheduling, efficient end-use technologies, public education, reducing losses in conveyance systems, water reuse and recycling and exploring into the limited and carefully planned use of off-stream storage. Prohibit the export of water resources. Provide speakers to the group on available conservation-oriented strategies for industry, agriculture, municipality, and domestic levels.

5. CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION

Incorporate climate change mitigation and adaptation strategy including reduction of carbon footprint in all sectors, flexible water sharing approaches, building safety buffers into water supply calculations and flood, drought, and emergency response planning. Provide speaker to the group on the realities of climate change for Manitoba in relation to water issues.