

# DRAINAGE

*The objective of Manitoba's water drainage policies is to enhance the economic viability of Manitoba's agricultural community through the provision of comprehensively planned drainage infrastructure.*

Drainage is defined as that infrastructure which is designed to remove excess rainfall during the growing season, based on the productive capability of the soil and on technical, economic and environmental factors. The policies present maintenance of drains as a higher priority than reconstruction, while reconstruction is a higher priority than new construction. Drainage shall be undertaken on a watershed basis, endeavouring to protect wetland areas, fish habitat and downstream water quality. Drainage will also consider water retention, control and timing of run-off.

## Drainage

- Co-ordination among landowners, local governing bodies, First Nations, conservation districts, watershed management associations and the Manitoba government needs to improve.
- Drainage enforcement, infrastructure maintenance and drain reconstruction are issues of importance.
- The provincial drainage system can be more effective.
- Methods need to be found to improve the level of consideration of drainage, fish habitat and water quality in the planning, licensing, construction and maintenance of drainage works.

## Actions Today

- Significantly increased funding for the provincial drainage network by allocating funds for the water capital and maintenance budgets.
- Implemented a drainage pilot project with the Whitemud Conservation District to partner in drainage licensing and program administration,

with a goal of expanding the project to other conservation districts.

- Encouraging the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans to promote reasonable drainage guidelines that improve drainage and protect fish habitat.
- Promoting and expanding the number of conservation districts within Manitoba.

## Actions for Tomorrow

- Develop and implement a clear, co-ordinated approach among local organizations, all levels of government, First Nations and jurisdictions outside of Manitoba to properly assess and manage drainage issues.
- Develop appropriate standards for drainage that incorporates agricultural needs, the protection of fish and wildlife habitat and downstream water quality.
- Recognize regional variations in drainage issues and requirements.
- Develop drainage plans locally, within the context of the watershed, which consider watershed rehabilitation, potential impacts, wetland conservation and fish habitat.
- Incorporate drainage as part of watershed planning in new water legislation proposals.
- Seek methods to streamline the approval process and improve enforcement of drainage requirements.
- Improve drainage maintenance and address the deteriorating drainage infrastructure.



### 3. Implementation

## Framework for Manitoba's Water Strategy

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An effective and transparent method of implementing *Manitoba's Water Strategy* is crucial to ensuring long-term conservation of our water resources. The development of this implementation framework will be a participatory process that considers both present and future demands on our water, and ensures the protection of ecosystems.

*Manitoba's Water Strategy* is comprised of actions that have been undertaken or proposed, to address specific issues in the six different policy areas. Implementation has begun and will continue to be a priority. A three-part implementation framework has been created to integrate and coordinate our strategy. The three elements of this framework are:

- I. the development of an integrated water planning and management system**
- II. the review and consolidation of water legislation**
- III. the development of the mechanisms for financing water management and planning**

Based on the input provided from users and user groups, the watershed-planning processes will tackle specific issues and prioritize water needs and allocations on a local level. These will then be compared to other management plans, embodying the framework of ecosystem-based planning outlined in the COSDI report.

Watershed plans will be brought together so priorities for the entire basin can be established. Basin planning will be done within the context of Manitoba's vision and mission. Partnerships and agreements are imperative to guaranteeing the fulfillment of these plans. It is also imperative to the success of watershed planning that environmental stewardship, our quality of life and the viability of our economy be included. This will be done with legislation to ensure the future of our water resources remain an important part of Manitoba's environment and economy.

To complete this exhaustive task, the public will continue to be consulted on a variety of water management issues. The information gathered will be used to determine and develop the future course of water management in Manitoba. The following is a brief discussion of the three elements of the implementation framework.

## I. The Development of an Integrated Water Planning and Management System

Integrated water planning and management is a public policy priority for the government of Manitoba. The framework for water management planning is intended to provide general guidance by outlining the components and steps used in water management planning. While the major components of all plans must be similar, detailed processes for preparation of each of these plans will vary.

Planning at basin, aquifer, and watershed levels has occurred to varying degrees in the province for more than a decade. The components of the framework reflect successes from past experience and new requirements based on our increased understanding of the complexity of the environment and the challenges of the future.

Planning and managing resources and activities on the basis of watersheds, basins and aquifers is supported by Manitobans as voiced through public consultation processes. The government, through its commitment to sustainable development, has made it clear that responsibility for water management is shared by all Manitobans. At the same time, the provincial government will provide a lead role to guide water management by working to create watershed districts across the province. We can work toward this goal by building on the example set by existing conservation districts, groups driven by local priorities that partner with a variety of local stakeholders to accomplish innovative water management programs. Municipal governments, local governing bodies, First Nations, agricultural producers, industry and members of the general public will need to play a role in water management planning activities.

The government will support and facilitate public involvement and ensure that appropriate planning activities are conducted.

Water can be managed on a watershed basis to address inefficiencies and environmental, economic, and social impacts. Municipalities and local governing bodies require a process to co-ordinate their efforts in the development of watershed-based plans. Manitoba would benefit from co-operative, watershed based planning with other provincial jurisdictions to ensure actions are complementary and co-ordinated.

The *Manitoba Water Strategy* will support development of a watershed-planning framework that provides all Manitobans with an opportunity to participate. Public participation will ensure our strategy is effective, as the consideration of community interests will be maintained throughout the planning process. The use of local knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge is a critical element in the understanding of water management and adaptations at a community level. This includes predictions for seasonal and annual fluctuations of the resource. Watershed management plans must be adequately maintained and enforced to be effective.

Watershed plans must also be flexible to develop an integrated approach between provincial, basin, watershed, conservation district, aquifer, planning district, municipal, First Nation and large scale land and water use plans. Obtaining the participation of Manitoba Hydro, the resources sector, agricultural producers, industry and others will also be essential.

## II. The Review and Consolidation of Water Legislation

One of the key components of Manitoba's Water Strategy is the review and modification of legislation related to water. This work has already begun with new legislation to protect drinking water through the *Drinking Water Safety Act* and another law banning bulk water removals. It also includes the development of legislation to compensate those who may be affected by the operation of the expanded Red River Floodway.

The intent is to develop comprehensive water legislation that will incorporate most existing water legislation into a single act. This review and development of legislation is based on recent public input, and will be subject to further, more extensive, public consultation. *The Water Rights Act, The Water Resources Administration Act, The Ground Water and Water Well Act, The Diking Authority Act, The Water Commission Act, The Water Supply Commission Act and The Water Resources Conservation and Protection Act* will be reviewed for inclusion in the consolidation. Further review will determine when other water legislation should also be consolidated. The legislative changes will work within the watershed planning components to aid, regulate, and strengthen water management in Manitoba.

We will work towards providing secure water supplies for current users, while ensuring water is available for other potential users in the future. Watershed, aquifer and basin planning should be recognized in legislation. The provision for, and determination of, requirements to sustain life within the ecosystem is not recognized in legislation. This must be considered a paramount objective to maintain aquatic health.

The Manitoba government has made progress in addressing the administrative backlog of water license applications and will continue to do so simultaneously with the watershed planning process. This legislative renewal process will take into account the requirements of the federal *Fisheries Act* to ensure compatibility and a more integrated and seamless approach for clients.

The Manitoba government recognizes that all stakeholders within the watershed are important and each can play an important role in the development of legislation that puts us on solid ground for the future.



### III. The Development of the Mechanisms for Financing Water Management and Planning

The benefits we realize from our relationship with water can at times be overshadowed by the destructive nature of flooding. In 1999, excessive rainfall and runoff in portions of southwestern Manitoba posed significant costs to agricultural and rural communities. The loss of income for those Manitobans had effects in many other areas of the economy as well. Physical and emotional trauma takes a toll on those who experience flooding.

According to the International Joint Commission (IJC), the economic damage to Canada and the United States from the 1997 flood in the Red River Basin approached \$7 billion, and flood recovery and mitigation costs continue to grow. Additionally, the human suffering and social and economic impact on individuals and their communities has been substantial. Through perseverance and determination Manitobans met the challenges of these and other flood events. Now is the time to take the necessary steps to protect ourselves from future floods through preventative action and co-operation.

*The Land Drainage Review, the Water Use and Allocation Review, the Livestock Review, the Drinking Water Review, the IJC report, and The Water Commission Review* of the 1997 flood have all brought to light the importance of effective water management. This includes maintenance of provincial and other works, water supply and flood control infrastructure development, water use, flow and quality monitoring, data collection and analysis, policies and regulations on development in flood prone areas and enforcement of new water legislation.

Proper watershed planning and management in Manitoba will require the commitment of financial and other resources from various source partnerships. Funding options for the continued maintenance and reconstruction of the provincial waterway system and watershed restoration projects should be explored to reflect an equitable sharing of benefits and costs among users. This planning should consider all uses of water, drainage, effluent discharge and waterpower.

Significant concerns have been expressed about overall funding and the level of contributions from among the partners. Throughout the 1990s, funding cuts at both federal and provincial levels affected the ability of all stakeholders to maintain and manage water resources properly. While funding has improved, there is clearly a need for long-term, sustainable funding for the future. Stakeholders have expressed a willingness to address the situation. Therefore, a financial strategy will involve all stakeholders in a co-operative discussion working towards new funding arrangements and partnerships. Various committees comprised of all levels of government and other key groups and organizations will be formed. Their task will be to seek consensus on new funding arrangements that are fair and equitable.



## 4. Summary

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Manitobans currently face a number of complex and challenging water policy areas. The Manitoba government is taking action due to the necessity for finding immediate solutions. We also must manage with an eye towards sustainability and a comprehensive vision. The Manitoba government is working towards a more holistic and integrated water strategy to guide our actions into the future. To manage sustainably, we must become true stewards of the resource by considering all of the important components within a watershed.

The goal of *Manitoba's Water Strategy* is to develop watershed-based planning across the entire province to ensure that future management of specific water issues is done carefully. A sustainable approach will ensure that all our needs are met, while maintaining ecosystem protection. Sustainability is the key to successful water management.

The three elements of the implementation framework outlined in this document are crucial to *Manitoba's Water Strategy* process. This is the means to co-ordinate diverse actions into a broad, coherent and integrated strategy for the future. The development of this framework will be a participatory process that considers present and future anticipated demands on our water, within a sustainable vision.

Water management in Manitoba is a big job. All Manitobans rely on water for their own personal use, but many must also rely on water, directly or indirectly, to provide an income for themselves and their families. Water is critical to ecosystem viability and this must be maintained. For Manitoba's Water Strategy to be successful we must develop effective, long-lasting partnerships among all Manitobans to secure safe, clean water supplies for our future.