

Water Licensing Branch - Oak River Watershed

The Water Licensing Branch is the regulatory body that is responsible for issuing authorizations (e.g. permits, licences, etc.) under *The Water Rights Act* for the use of water for agricultural, municipal, industrial, irrigation or other purposes. Water used for domestic purposes does not require a licence. A more detailed description of the Water Licensing Branch's mandate and contact information are available on the Manitoba Water Stewardship website.

The intent of water rights licensing is to protect the interests of licensees, domestic users, the general public and the environment with respect to the use or diversion of water or the construction and operation of water control works under licence. Licences are issued on the "first in time – first in right" principal", established by the date the application is submitted. The general and specific conditions that are included on all licences reflect, in part, the information received from the technical and management studies that have been carried out for the project and/or water body. For surface water projects, this determination is based on an analysis of stream flow data, riparian needs, the water use requirements of senior water users, domestic needs, and instream flow requirements. For groundwater projects, this determination is based on an assessment of hydrogeological information including; geological information on aquifers, aquifer sustainable yield estimates and water allocation budgets, where available, as well the water use requirements of senior users and domestic needs.

With the exception of the Assiniboine River, aquifer or stream water budgets have not been established for the Oak River watershed. Therefore, the total amount of water available for allocation in the watershed has not been determined. The amount of water allocated in this watershed is small compared to many other areas in the province. The water supplies in the watershed include the Assiniboine River and its many tributaries, as well as the Assiniboine Buried Valley Aquifer and the Rocanville Buried Valley Aquifer. Despite the watershed's abundant surface water supplies, residents of this watershed generally use groundwater. The buried valley aquifers, in particular, seem to offer significant groundwater development potential. In Brandon, a supplementary (for emergency purposes) groundwater supply for the City has been developed from an extension of the Assiniboine Buried Valley Aquifer, and industries east of Brandon have also developed groundwater supplies from similar aquifer units.

There are presently nineteen surface water projects on file with the Water Licensing Branch in the Oak River watershed of which six are for livestock watering, twelve are for irrigation purposes, and one surface water sourced municipal system in the watershed, a rural distribution pipeline, allocated 12 dam³ per year. There are presently thirty-four groundwater projects on file with the Water Licensing Branch in the Oak River Watershed, of which seventeen are for livestock watering, seven for irrigation purposes, one for other purposes, and nine groundwater source municipal distribution systems in the watershed, mostly small villages and Hutterite colonies, but also including the Town of Virden which is allocated 1184 dam³ per year.

The following tables present all of the projects on file with the Water Licensing Branch for licensing in the Oak River watershed:

Licences:

Purpose	Licences Issued		Total Licences
	Groundwater	Surface Water	
Agricultural	15	1	16
Industrial	0	0	0
Irrigation	3	6	9
Municipal	8	1	9
Other	1	0	1
Total	27	8	35

Applications:

Purpose	Applications		Total Applications
	Groundwater	Surface Water	
Agricultural	2	5	7
Industrial	0	0	0
Irrigation	4	6	10
Municipal	1	0	1
Other	0	0	0
Total	7	11	18

Allocations:

Purpose	Allocated Under Licence (dam ³)		Total Allocation (dam ³)
	Groundwater	Surface Water	
Agricultural	265.3	0	265.3
Industrial	0	0	0
Irrigation	483.6	324.7	808.3
Municipal	1872.0	12.3	1884.3
Other	0	0	0
Total	2620.9	337.0	2890.9

State of the Watershed Report Card Recommendation:

© With the exception of the Assiniboine River, no allocation limits have been set for the major rivers in this watershed. Current allocations are believed to be below the sustainable yield of the major streams, based on site specific water budget evaluations carried out during the course of issuing a water rights licence.