



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Improving Drought Resilience in Alberta Through a Simulation project report released

*Edmonton.* A new report by the Alberta Water Council (AWC) summarizes the results of a recent exercise that simulated a severe drought in Alberta and presents recommendations to improve drought management in the province. The project was initiated in 2020 to encourage individuals and organizations across the province to increase their resilience to drought, a natural phenomenon common in Alberta.

“As we continue working with partners to prepare for the risk of severe drought, the Alberta Water Council is helping communities and organizations prepare to conserve water and maximize our water supply,” says Rebecca Schulz, Minister of Environment and Protected Areas. “This report is part of helping our communities and province be fully prepared to respond to drought, both in 2024 and over the long term. We look forward to working with the Alberta Water Council and others to keep making every drop count.”

The recommendations identified in the *Improving Drought Resilience in Alberta Through a Simulation* project were developed based on key learnings and outcomes from a drought simulation exercise developed and hosted by an AWC project team in June 2022. The simulation used a hydrological model and was focused on testing management structures and communication channels in the South Saskatchewan River Basin, an area in the province especially prone to drought. Exercise participants represented a range of interests, including industry, agriculture, First Nations, environmental organizations, municipalities, and the provincial government.

“It is important to plan for droughts before they occur. However, what often happens is decision makers and individuals get complacent about planning for drought when they are not experiencing one, which can lead to difficult decisions and even panic in extreme circumstances,” says Andre Asselin, executive director of the Alberta Water Council. “Drought simulation exercises provide opportunities to test scenarios and identify challenges and opportunities in drought planning and management. The timing of this project was good as 2023 was a very dry year in many parts of the province and we are expecting a dry spring and summer in 2024.”

Margo Jarvis-Redelback, executive director of the Alberta Irrigation Districts Association, participated in the exercise. “Effective drought response requires collaboration from all players involved in water management,” she adds. “The exercise provided opportunity for government, municipalities, industry, and other organizations to assemble and explore drought response actions and impacts in a neutral setting, therefore supporting critical discussion to inform necessary response to actual drought events.”

The recommendations are organized into three themes which focus on increasing collaboration within drought planning and management, furthering the information base available to water managers and users, and developing guidance tools to help them better understand what is available to them in times of drought. More information about the exercise and the report and recommendations will be publicly available on the AWC website. The report's appendices also include information and resources used to develop the simulation exercise.

Visit <https://www.awchome.ca/projects/improving-drought-resilience-alberta-through-simulation-24/> to access the report.

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*The Alberta Water Council is a collaborative partnership that provides leadership, expertise, and sector knowledge and perspectives to help governments, Indigenous Peoples, industry, and non-government organizations to advance the outcomes of the Water for Life strategy.*

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