

Tracking Implementation Progress of Council Recommendations Update Report - March 2012 – Vol. 1

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

This system for tracking implementation of Council recommendations is a simple tool to allow the Board to easily assess implementation progress. It will:

1. support the Board's understanding of the Council's accomplishments;
2. encourage and support implementers of Council recommendations in meeting their commitments;
3. identify areas where the Council process for developing recommendations and advice can be improved; and
4. increase the credibility of this process.

As part of the implementation tracking system, Council staff will regularly prepare two reports: a detailed report and an update report. The Detailed Report lists all recommendations and their implementation status, by individual recommendation, theme or full suite of recommendations. This report is in table format and is fully updated twice a year. The Detailed Report is posted on the Council's website.

The Update Report provides a general overview of implementation progress, highlighting both successes and challenges; it will be presented to the Board as part of the Management Report at the March and October Board meetings. As part of this presentation, staff will facilitate a Board discussion on implementation progress. The Board may provide advice to implementers concerning any challenges that are identified.

1.2 Inaugural Update Report

This first Update Report will be the baseline for future updates. Subsequent reports may be structured differently, but will report on key successes, challenges and general progress since the previous report.

This Report describes implementation progress by project. It is difficult to track progress for a number of Council's early projects because they framed advice as opportunities rather than recommendations. Council projects that fall into this category are not included in this report; these include:

- Alberta Water Research Strategy
- Review of Implementation Progress of Water for Life
 - 2004/2005
 - 2005/2006
- Water Policy Issues and Gaps

2.0 Projects

2.1 *Water For Life* Renewal (January 2008)

Recommendations were incorporated into the renewed *Water for Life* Strategy and Action Plan.

2.2 Intra-Basin Water Movement (June 2008)

The recommendations are being considered in ongoing water allocation work by Alberta Environment and Water.

2.3 Wetland Policy and Implementation Plan (September 2008)

2.3.1 Wetland Policy

Alberta Environment and Water has used the wetland policy recommendations to inform the development of policy intent for wetlands. This work, in conjunction with the AWC recommendations, will be the basis for development of a new provincial wetland policy. Many external and internal stakeholders, including staff from a wide range of ministries, have helped inform the policy development process to date.

2.3.2 Wetland Implementation Plan

Recommendations were considered in preparing wetland policy intent and direction. Recommendations will also be considered in crafting the implementation plan.

2.4 Shared Governance (September 2008)

Alberta Environment and Water is working to incorporate many of these recommendations into a framework for watershed management planning. The Department will also provide annual updates to WFL partners on recommendations that the partnerships have directed to it.

The Council report "*Moving from Words to Actions*" built on recommendations in the "*Shared Governance*" report. *Moving from Words to Actions* recommendations are contributing to improved communication and coordination between the WFL partnerships, Land Stewardship Centre and the Government of Alberta.

2.5 Watershed Management Planning (September 2008)

Using the Council recommendations, Alberta Environment and Water is developing a framework for watershed management planning, which will be followed by a guidebook.

The Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils are at various stages of executing their mandates; recently-formed WPACs are developing governance structures, while others are actively engaging stakeholders to do “state of watersheds” and/or watershed management plans. The WPACs are working with Watershed Stewardship Groups in their watersheds to communicate and coordinate their actions for a shared outcome.

2.6 Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity Sector Planning (September 2008)

The key recommendations from this work, including the Framework and Annotated Table of Contents for developing sector plans, led to the creation of the current team, which is supporting the seven major water-using sectors as they develop their CEP Sector Plans. Most recommendations have either been implemented or are awaiting completion of all the sector plans before they can be addressed.

2.7 Healthy Aquatic Ecosystems (March 2009)

The Council completed one project that will help to identify areas within Alberta’s watersheds that substantially contribute to aquatic ecosystem health. Four of those recommendations were directed to the Council, which then initiated the Non-Point Source Pollution project to address two of them. The other two recommendations (aquatic ecosystem education programs and sector best management practices) have not been selected as priority work for Council at this time.

To date, no substantive new work has been undertaken by the Government of Alberta to address recommendations related to understanding and addressing contaminants that could affect human health through the consumption of traditional subsistence food. However, the Government has noted that this issue could be addressed as part of a broader regional planning initiative.

Regarding the recommendations to develop measures and monitor aquatic ecosystem health, the Government of Alberta is working on a report that will identify foundational indicators to support watershed planning. In addition, the recently developed plan for monitoring in the oil sands areas will contribute to collaborative sampling and monitoring based on the suite of provincial measures of aquatic health.

2.8 *Water for Life* Implementation Review 2006 – 2008 (June 2009)

Recommendations were incorporated into the renewed *Water for Life* Strategy and Action Plan.

2.9 Water Allocation Transfer System Upgrade Project (August 2009)

Recommendations are being considered as part of a broader water allocation review by Alberta Environment and Water.

2.10 Provincial Ecological Aquatic Criteria for Health (November 2009)

The Council suggested seven criteria to “aid and guide the identification of areas within Alberta’s watersheds that substantially contribute to aquatic ecosystem health.” The Government of Alberta is using these criteria as it develops a model with a map depicting geographic areas for aquatic environmentally significant areas to support watershed and regional planning.

2.11 Moving from Words to Actions (June 2011)

Many of the recommendations have been implemented and others are being more closely examined to facilitate coordination and avoid duplication of effort.

3.0 Conclusion

Most recommendations directed to Council stakeholders have been either implemented or are informing work to improve water management in Alberta. Council’s advice has contributed to the advancement of the *Water for Life* strategy, and its periodic implementation reviews informed the renewal of the *WFL* strategy and action plan. In addition, recommendations on matters of policy, governance, tools and areas for future work have enhanced the ability of both the Council and its partners to deliver on their respective mandates.

Tracking implementation progress of recommendations will help ensure the Council’s advice remains timely, focused and effective. This tool will enable the Board to better understand and assess implementation successes and challenges and will help Board members communicate implementation progress to their stakeholders.