

**Saskatchewan Provincial Case Study**  
**Analysis of Water Strategies for the Prairie Watershed Region**  
*Working Draft for Comment*

**Notice to Reviewer**

This document is one of seven jurisdictional and inter-jurisdictional case studies that will form the knowledge base for a synthesis report entitled “A Synthesis of Challenges and Innovations in Provincial and State Water Strategies for the Prairie Watershed Region.” The other six case studies cover Manitoba, Alberta, Interprovincial Management, Minnesota, North Dakota and International Transboundary Management. The synthesis paper will be presented at the Prairie Water Policy Symposium on September 22-23, 2005. The Prairie Water Policy Symposium is a project of the International Institute for Sustainable Development ([www.iisd.org](http://www.iisd.org)).

Information in the jurisdictional case studies was obtained from publicly available sources (e.g., Internet and literature sources) and supplemented through interviews with government officials. **The information was up-to-date as of September 21<sup>st</sup> 2005.** Comments received after this date are being incorporated and a new working draft will be posted later in September.

**This case study is in an unedited, working paper format.** Please email comments to Bryan Osborne at [panterraman@shaw.ca](mailto:panterraman@shaw.ca).

Prepared as input to the Prairie Water Policy Symposium – a project of the International Institute for Sustainable Development ([www.iisd.org](http://www.iisd.org)).

Case Study researched and written by:  
Bryan Osborne, President  
Panterra Management Ltd.  
Tel: 204-885-7308 Fax: 204-885-7312  
Email: [panterraman@shaw.ca](mailto:panterraman@shaw.ca)  
Website: <http://www.panterraman.com/>

# Prairie Water Strategies and Policies – Saskatchewan

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## 1. Provincial Context

There are 10 major drainage basins in Saskatchewan, including:<sup>1</sup>

- Slave River;
- Kazaa River;
- Athabasca River;
- Churchill River;
- Saskatchewan River;
- Lake Winnipeg;
- Assiniboine River;
- Qu'Appelle River;
- Souris River; and
- Missouri River

While several drainage systems flow through the province (primarily from west to east), the relatively populated southern half of the province depends heavily on the Saskatchewan River for domestic, agricultural, industrial, and power production uses.<sup>2</sup>

Frequent droughts since the agricultural settlement period have placed considerable pressure on the viability on the province's agriculture industry. A key response strategy since the 1930s has focused on the construction of small to medium water storage reservoirs – either on farms or to support larger communities. Based on the apparent success of several larger projects, there are new suggestions that an increased focus on large-scale water management is required.<sup>3</sup>

In the spring of 2001, at least 5800 people were affected by a serious outbreak of gastrointestinal illness in the North Battleford area. In response to this event and the Walkerton tragedy a year earlier, Saskatchewan water policy is currently focused on ensuring the provision of safe drinking water to all residents, with a longer-term focus on watershed planning and management.

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<sup>1</sup> Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (2005). SWA: Maps. Available: <http://www.swa.ca/Maps/Default.asp> (Accessed 25 July 2005)

<sup>2</sup> Keewatin Publications (2003). Focus on Saskatchewan. Available: [http://www.keewatin.ca/Pages/Saskatchewan\\_section.html](http://www.keewatin.ca/Pages/Saskatchewan_section.html) (Accessed 25 July 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Saskatchewan Agrivision Corporation (2004). Water Wealth: A Fifty Year Water Plan for Saskatchewan, Regina, SK (Executive Summary), prepared by Clifton Associates Ltd., 12 p.

## 2. Vision and Key Goals

At this time, the *Saskatchewan Watershed Authority* is primarily responsible for the long-term management of Saskatchewan’s water resources, while the Saskatchewan Environment department coordinates the *Safe Drinking Water Strategy* and serves as a regulator and standards setting agency for many drinking water supplies. An earlier *Water Management Framework* is also germane to this study. The Visions<sup>4, 5, 6</sup> of these initiatives are:

*“A sustainable, reliable, safe and clean supply of drinking water that is valued by the citizens of Saskatchewan” (Safe Drinking Water Strategy, 2002)*

*“Excellence in watershed management, promoting safe, sustainable water supplies in healthy ecosystems” (Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, 2005)*

*“Safe and reliable water supplies within healthy and diverse aquatic ecosystems” (Water Management Framework, 1999)*

The Key Goals<sup>7</sup> of the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (SWA), Saskatchewan Environment, and the Safe Drinking Water Strategy (SDWS) relate to:

- Providing safe, clean, and sustainable drinking water systems (SDWS #1);
- Ensuring the drinking water regulatory system is clear and effective (SDWS #2);
- Protecting high quality source water supplies into the future (SDWS #3);
- Building a high level of trust and value among citizens who consume drinking water supplies (SDWS #4);
- Ensuring Saskatchewan’s water management infrastructure (i.e. dams and distribution networks) are safe, effective, and sustainable (SWA #1); and
- Maintaining healthy watersheds and aquifers through source water protection planning and public awareness (SWA #2).

### 2.1 Process and Content

In 1994, Saskatchewan embarked on a major consultative process in support of a *Water Management Framework*. An inter-departmental working group led the process, which by 1998 resulted in the identification of six principles to guide water management planning in

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<sup>4</sup> Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (2005). About Us/Mission Statement and Mandate/Vision. Available: <http://www.swa.ca/AboutUs/MissionStatement.asp?type=VisionAndPrinciples> (Accessed 15 July 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Saskatchewan Environment (2005). Safe Drinking Water Strategy 2005-2006 Provincial Budget Performance Plan. Queen’s Printer, Regina, SK. p. 3

<sup>6</sup> Saskatchewan Environment (1999). Water/Surface and Groundwater Protection/Water Management Framework. Available: <http://www.se.gov.sk.ca/ecosystem/water/framework/PAGE1.htm#Executive%20Summary> (Accessed 10 July 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (2005). About Us/Mission Statement and Mandate/Vision. Available: <http://www.swa.ca/AboutUs/MissionStatement.asp=GoalsAndObjectives> (Accessed 10 July 2005).

Saskatchewan: stewardship, partnership, integrated management, value of water, sustainable development, and best practices.

16 policy objectives were also identified, covering three broad themes<sup>8</sup>:

### *Protection – of water and wetlands*

- Objective 1 – Maintain, restore, and protect the health of aquatic and riparian ecosystems and drinking water resources.
- Objective 2 – Minimize contamination of water bodies.
- Objective 3 – Protect aquifers from depletion and contamination.
- Objective 4 – Foster wetlands retention and orderly drainage, in accordance with regulations and public policy.

### *Management and Development – of the resource*

- Objective 5 – Enhance safety of municipal and domestic drinking water supplies.
- Objective 6 – Promote water developments with broad public benefits.
- Objective 7 – Promote economic diversification and stability through sustainable use of water and related land resources.
- Objective 8 – Prevent bulk export of water.
- Objective 9 – Establish innovative approaches for financing costs of developing, operating, maintaining, and upgrading infrastructure.
- Objective 10 – Plan developments in consideration of the potential effects of flood, drought, and climate change.

### *Coordination and Public Involvement – in government activities for decision-making*

- Objective 11 – Clearly define and fully integrate agency mandates and activities related to water.
- Objective 12 – Manage water on a watershed basis.
- Objective 13 – Recognize Aboriginal peoples' interest.
- Objective 14 – Adequate monitoring and research of water resources.
- Objective 15 – Enhance public awareness and involvement in water management planning and decision-making.
- Objective 16 – Recognize the intrinsic and economic value of water and cost of its management.

Several departments and crown corporations are responsible for water legislation, authorization of water use and development, and regulation of flows within the province. These include the Saskatchewan government departments of: Environment, Health, Agriculture and Food,

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<sup>8</sup> Saskatchewan Environment (1999). Water/Surface and Groundwater Protection/Water Management Framework. Available: <http://www.se.gov.sk.ca/ecosystem/water/framework/> (Accessed 20 July 2005).

Government Relations, and the Saskatchewan Research Council; and the crown corporations of SaskWater, SaskPower, and the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority.

The following provincial legislation and regulations relate directly to water management:<sup>9, 10</sup>

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| - Agricultural Operations Act/Regulations        | - Conservation and Development Act         |
| - Drainage Control Regulations                   | - Environmental Assessment Act             |
| - Environmental Management and Protection Act    | - Env. Mgmt. and Prot. Act Regs/Guidelines |
| - Fisheries Act                                  | - Irrigation Act                           |
| - Natural Resources Act                          | - Provincial Lands Act                     |
| - Public Health Act (relating to drinking water) | - Reservoir Development Area Regulations   |
| - Saskatchewan Watershed Authority Act           | - Water Appeal Board Act                   |
| - Water Corporation Act                          | - Water Power Act                          |
| - Water Regulations                              | - Shoreline Pollution Control Regulations  |
| - Water Right Regulations                        | - Watershed Associations Act               |

In the spring of 2001, at least 5800 people were affected by a serious outbreak of gastrointestinal illness in the North Battleford area. The North Saskatchewan River water supply serving the city and some surrounding areas was contaminated by the parasite *Cryptosporidium parvum*.<sup>11</sup> In response to the North Battleford outbreak, and the inquiry's findings, Saskatchewan Environment initiated a sweeping *Safe Drinking Water Strategy*. With a top priority on human health, the five-year strategy is focused on:<sup>12</sup>

- enhancing the regulatory environment administered by the Saskatchewan departments of Environment and Health, and the regional health authorities;
- improving the planning, use, development, and conservation of provincial water resources with improved watershed management and source protection – through one management entity, the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority;
- the revised operation of SaskWater to become a cost-effective water supply and wastewater treatment infrastructure service provider;
- funding priority water infrastructure needs through infrastructure grants; and
- integrating source protection programs through Saskatchewan Environment, Agriculture and Food, and the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, among other partners.

A key element of the strategy saw the creation of the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (SWA), to better coordinate water source protection across the province – by merging the existing watershed management responsibilities of SaskWater, Saskatchewan Environment, and the Saskatchewan Wetland Conservation Corporation.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Saskatchewan Environment (2005). Water/Surface and Groundwater Protection/Roles and Responsibilities. Available: <http://www.se.gov.sk.ca/ecosystem/water/ROLES.htm> (Accessed 20 July 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (2005). About Us/Mission Statement and Mandate/Goals and Objectives. Available: <http://www.swa.ca/AboutUs/MissionStatement.asp=GoalsAndObjectives> (Accessed 15 July 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Laing, Justice Robert. D. (2002). Report of North Battleford Water Inquiry. Queen's Printer, Regina, SK, p. 4

<sup>12</sup> Saskatchewan Environment (2005). Safe Drinking Water Strategy 2005-2006 Provincial Budget Performance Plan, Regina, SK. p. 2

<sup>13</sup> Saskatchewan Environment (2002). Water/North Battleford Water Inquiry/Long-Term Safe Drinking Water Strategy. Available: <http://www.se.gov.sk.ca/environment/protection/water/water.asp> (Accessed 15 July 2005).

## **2.2 Formalization**

Saskatchewan's *Water Management Framework* was adopted by cabinet in 1999, however it is unclear what role (if any) this comprehensive planning document played in the development of the *Safe Drinking Water Strategy* (adopted by cabinet in April 2002) or the establishment of the SWA (via the *Saskatchewan Watershed Authority Act* proclaimed in October 2002).

In terms of Saskatchewan water policy, implementation of the *Safe Drinking Water Strategy* and development of the *Saskatchewan Watershed Authority* together represent current provincial water management direction. The earlier *Water Management Framework* represents a comprehensive water policy agenda which the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority will draw upon in its development of future policy on protecting/managing watersheds and water sources.<sup>14</sup>

For the purposes of this case study research, all three documents will be considered – under the assumption that the more recent policy events represent focused applications of the broad *Water Management Framework*, the details of which are also germane.

## **2.3 Priorities and Timeframes**

Since its initiation in 2002, the SDWS has focused heavily on improving the capabilities of communities to provide safe drinking water supplies, including:<sup>15</sup>

- increasing operator certification within the province;
- increasing the number of municipal system operators certified by Saskatchewan Environment;
- improving compliance with bacteriological water quality and disinfection standards;
- providing technical assistance and training to First Nation water system operators;
- initiating watershed planning within select watersheds and one aquifer system;
- funding a substantial number of water and sewer system capital projects;
- rigorous monitoring and administration of the *Bacteriological Follow-up Protocol for Waterworks Regulated by Saskatchewan Environment*;
- encouraging compliance with waterworks quality control and emergency response requirements.

The origins and scope of the SDWS are rooted in the concept of protecting human health, in response to the very real concern of contaminated drinking water supplies. The concepts of inter-generational equity and integrated environmental, economic, and social thinking – typically associated with sustainable development – are not central to the SDWS.

The longer-term goal of source water protection is being addressed by the SWA, with its focus on watershed planning. The SWA is also responsible for most water supply reservoirs and dams

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<sup>14</sup> Hjertaas, Dale (2005). Personal Communication.

<sup>15</sup> Saskatchewan Environment (2005). State of Drinking Water Quality in Saskatchewan and the SDWS: Annual Report 2004-05. Queens Printer, Regina, SK. p. 5-6.

in the province, water allocation, surface water hydrology, flood forecasting, and groundwater management.<sup>16 17</sup>

Planning and performance measurement horizons for the SWA are more open-ended, indicative of the fact that watershed management strategies must take into account the vagaries of wetland loss, in-stream flow requirements, natural variability, and questions related to climate change. The SWA also monitors water-related economic development trends.<sup>18</sup>

### **3. Structure and Planning**

In response to the findings of the North Battleford Water Inquiry, Saskatchewan initiated its Safe Drinking Water Strategy (SDWS) in April 2002. In coordinating the SDWS, Saskatchewan Environment also works closely with several other departments and agencies.

#### **3.1 Strategy Structure**

The following departments are involved in implementing the SDWS:<sup>19</sup>

##### *Saskatchewan Environment*

Saskatchewan Environment (SE) leads on planning and coordinating the SDWS, while also focusing heavily on inspections and compliance for all licensed water systems in the province. SE also issues permits for the construction of water and wastewater facilities, while managing a drinking water data system and drinking water communications. SE is responsible for establishing water quality standards for the province, both for drinking water and surface water.

##### *Saskatchewan Government Relations*

Saskatchewan Government Relations (SGR) provides funding assistance for water infrastructure to communities through several federal-provincial funding agreements, in addition to legislation and policy related to source water protection and water pricing.

##### *Saskatchewan Health/Regional Health Authorities*

Saskatchewan Health (SH) and the province's Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) are responsible for water analysis through the Saskatchewan Provincial Laboratory, inspection and compliance at certain semi-public water systems, the determination of water quality advisories in cases of potential waterborne illness.

##### *Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food*

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food (SAF) is responsible for pesticide application licenses, intensive livestock operations (storage and manure management plans), and the coordination of environmental farm planning in partnership with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Through

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<sup>16</sup> Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (2005). SWA 2005-2006 Provincial Budget Performance Plan, Queen's Printer, Regina, SK. p. 1-3.

<sup>17</sup> Hjertaas, Dale (2005). Personal Communication.

<sup>18</sup> Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (2005). SWA 2005-2006 Provincial Budget Performance Plan, Queen's Printer, Regina, SK. p. 5-8

<sup>19</sup> Saskatchewan Environment (2005). State of Drinking Water Quality in Saskatchewan and the SDWS: Annual Report 2004-05. Queens Printer, Regina, SK. p. 2.

its Agricultural Development Fund, SAF supports research, including projects related to agriculture-environment concerns.

Of note is the department's focus on supporting agricultural producers in their application of Integrated Pest Management principles. Saskatchewan's unique agricultural climate includes temperature extremes and low annual precipitation, which naturally keep many pest populations within a manageable range. Consequently, producers' pesticide useage occurs at relatively low levels on a per acre basis. Integrated Pest Management strategies adopted by producers assist in further pesticide reductions.<sup>20</sup>

### *SaskWater*<sup>21, 22</sup>

SaskWater was reorganized and received a new mandate in October 2002, becoming a fully commercial Crown corporation providing competitively-priced (while unsubsidized), customer-focused, quality water and wastewater services to Saskatchewan First Nations, industries, municipalities and rural water groups. In addition, SaskWater operates and maintains community-owned systems under contract and partners with communities and the private sector to design and build regional water supply systems (i.e. pipelines). SaskWater is viewed as a creative attempt to provide water supply management solutions for many smaller communities where this professional assistance may be beyond their funding ability.

### *Saskatchewan Watershed Authority*

Formed in October 2002, the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (SWA) is the lead agency responsible for the long-term protection and management of source water, aquifers, and watersheds. The SWA is a crown corporation reporting to the Minister of Environment.

## **3.2 Authority Structure**

Comprised largely of former staff of SaskWater,<sup>23</sup> another provincial crown corporation which was formerly responsible for many aspects of water management and development, the SWA is based in Moose Jaw and has significant operations in Regina and several regional centres. It is comprised of the following divisions:

### *Operations Division (water management)*<sup>24</sup>

The SWA is responsible for managing both surface water and groundwater. This includes review, approval, and licensing of all water use projects. SWA water management staff are involved with hydrologic, groundwater, and flood risk studies while also participating in flood forecasting, long-term planning, and environmental impact assessments.

The SWA issues water rights for the sustainable use of Saskatchewan's water resources – for domestic, municipal source water, agricultural, industrial, recreation, and wildlife purposes.

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<sup>20</sup> Jansen, Andy (2005). Personal Communication.

<sup>21</sup> Blackwell, Ron (2005). Personal Communication.

<sup>22</sup> Hjertass, Dale (2005). Personal Communication.

<sup>23</sup> During the SWA's formation, the role of SaskWater was revised to focus solely on providing cost-effective water supply and wastewater treatment infrastructure services to Saskatchewan communities and industry (including irrigation).

<sup>24</sup> Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (2005). Water Management. Available: <http://www.swa.ca/WaterManagement/index.asp> (Accessed 1 June 2005).

SWA is also responsible for the review and licensing of drainage systems, and also works to investigate and address drainage disputes between landowners.

Citizens who own or occupy land adjoining a water body or groundwater source are not required to obtain water use approvals for domestic use, which includes most aspects of household and/or agricultural use (not including irrigation or intensive livestock operations).

SWA water management staff are also responsible for the long-term maintenance, rehabilitation, and upgrading of 45 water reservoirs and 130 km of conveyance channels, which are major focus for the corporation's activity.

### *Stewardship Division*<sup>25, 26, 27</sup>

This division provides three interrelated activities: watershed monitoring and assessment; watershed and aquifer planning support to communities; and stewardship programs. Seven watershed planning processes are currently underway in areas initially identified as priority watersheds. A *Social Priority and Watershed Health Ranking* process (based on watershed indicators) derived from a *State of Watershed Reporting* protocol will determine priority watersheds for planning attention in the future. An evaluation framework is expected to be complete in 2005, based upon a *Stress Condition Response Model* developed by the SWA. The ultimate suite of available watershed indicators will be comprehensive and flexible – for province-wide watershed application. It is plausible that a unique set of indicators may be utilized within each watershed for which a management plan is created. State of watershed reports will be produced for individual basins or groups of similar watersheds.<sup>28</sup>

SWA Stewardship staff also conduct biological assessments of critical wildlife habitat locations and employ a comprehensive GIS database to assist in all aspect of SWA activities, while coordinating Saskatchewan activities associated with the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, an international, multi-partner habitat program. SWA also works with more than 1200 private landowners in a voluntary Prairie Stewardship Program, encouraging public habitat protection and supporting important water quality goals (particularly non-point sources).

### *Policy and Communications Division*<sup>29</sup>

In addition to corporate communications and policy, this division is also responsible for program marketing and education. In order to build support for the SDWS and the broad goal of healthy watersheds, SWA watershed education staff are involved in the coordination and delivery of public education programs including:

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<sup>25</sup> Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (2005). Stewardship Programs. Available: <http://www.swa.ca/Stewardship/index.asp> (Accessed 1 June 2005).

<sup>26</sup> Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (2003). A Watershed and Aquifer Planning Model for Saskatchewan. Moose Jaw, 12 p.

<sup>27</sup> Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (2005). SWA 2005-2006 Provincial Budget Performance Plan, Queen's Printer, Regina, SK. p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Hanley, Terry (2005). Personal Communication.

<sup>29</sup> Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (2005). Watershed Education. Available: <http://www.swa.ca/WatershedEducation/index.asp> (Accessed 1 June 2005).

- Project WET (Water Education for Teachers), an inter-disciplinary K-12 education program supplementary curriculum guide and workshop program. It was first established in 1996 and involves many delivery partners;
- Project WILD, an instructional resource and workshop program for youth, delivered on request (for schools or other organizations). The focus is on the needs of wildlife for a healthy environment, with specific attention to watersheds, wetlands, waterfowl, fish, and riparian plants;
- Sturgeon Outreach, through which SWA staff work with Saskatchewan schools to raise sturgeon fry in classroom aquariums before releasing them in provincial waterways; and
- Ecotourism Promotion, through which the SWA works with Saskatchewan communities to develop and promote local ecotourism opportunities, typically associated with building community values and connections to local migratory shorebird populations and major wetland sites – again in support of healthy watersheds.

### 3.3 Planning Aspects of the SDWS and the SWA

The SDWS represents Saskatchewan’s current policy focus on drinking water quality, with the SWA supporting the longer-term aspects of the SDWS – source water protection through watershed management and related water management goals.

#### *Interdepartmental Planning*<sup>30</sup>

The SDWS is one of the province’s first *Key Cross-Government Strategies* to be developed in accordance with the Saskatchewan’s *Interdepartmental Planning Guidelines*, which emerged as part of a major government-wide “managing-for-results” initiative.

Key Cross-Government Strategies are deemed to have province-wide importance, “transcending the mandate of any one department and necessitating a collaborative effort among two or more departments and/or agencies to achieve more meaningful results.” Saskatchewan’s Inter-Departmental Planning Guidelines apply to interdepartmental initiatives that are “strategic, collaborative, and directly related to government priorities.”

An initiative defined as a Key Cross-Government Strategy is required to go through a comprehensive strategic planning and reporting process (a requirement for every government department). Key Cross-Government Strategies employ a decentralized accountability model, in which the responsibility for outcomes are shared among participating departments.

#### *Deputy Minister Level Guidance*<sup>31</sup>

A *Steering Committee for the Safe Drinking Water Strategy* comprised of the deputy ministers of departments participating in the SDWS provides broad guidance on the direction the strategy should take – meeting annually to review strategy performance and consider future plans. Participation at the deputy minister level also provides a direct link to the government’s elected

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<sup>30</sup> Saskatchewan Finance (2005). Government Accountability Framework/Key Cross-Government Strategies. Available: <http://www.gov.sk.ca/finance/accountability/relatedlinks.htm> (Accessed 20 July 2005).

<sup>31</sup> Ferris, S. (2005). Personal Communication.

officials (their ministers), providing for excellent political feedback on the strategy's effectiveness at the local level. The deputy minister of Saskatchewan Environment also chairs the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority board.

### *SDWS Policy and Programs Sub-Committee*

Reporting to the deputy minister steering committee is a sub-committee of interdepartmental staff assigned to the strategy. This committee and its smaller working groups are coordinated by Saskatchewan Environment, and meet quarterly to plan interdepartmental strategy implementation and performance measurement, among other tasks. The process appears to have worked well, with a high level of interdepartmental cooperation, information-sharing, and coordinated development of programs and legislation in several departments, including:

- improved water monitoring for bacteriological contaminants by Saskatchewan Environment, Saskatchewan Health/Health Regions (Health Regions deliver inspection of smaller semi-public waterworks);
- improved municipal land use planning legislation to protect source water by Saskatchewan Government Relations; and
- strong progress on certification of water system operators by Saskatchewan Environment, with First Nations training assistance provided by SaskWater.

### *SWA Water Management Planning*<sup>32</sup>

As a provincial crown corporation, the SWA operates under the same planning and reporting guidelines as a government department, as outlined within Saskatchewan's *Accountability Framework*. These include requirements for:

- Planning – including preparation of a vision, goals, objectives proposed actions, and a financial plan;
- Performance Management – including the determination of performance measures, risk assessment, program evaluation and review procedures; and
- Reporting – a commitment to prepare an annual report on performance results, allowing government ministers and the public to compare expected results with actual results.

Each year, the SWA and all Treasury Board crown corporations, departments, and Key Cross-Government Strategies submit their proposed activities during the government's budget estimates process as a *Performance Plan*, along with their annual report. The province's commercial crown corporations follow a different process.

The SWA Performance Plan provides information required to assess the corporation's annual progress, learn from these results, and improve future performance – indicated by the accompanying presentation of SWA plans for the coming year.

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<sup>32</sup> Saskatchewan Finance (2005). Government Accountability Framework. Available: <http://www.gov.sk.ca/finance/accountability/default.htm> (Accessed 20 July 2005).

## 4. Multi-level Coordination, Participation, Watershed Partnerships

While Saskatchewan is primarily responsible for managing water within its boundaries, the province relies heavily on the cooperation and partnership of the federal government and many policy and program delivery partners.

### 4.1 Federal Government

The *Water Management Framework*<sup>33</sup> highlighted the division of federal-provincial water-related responsibilities and relevant legislation. Federal jurisdiction cover areas with significant potential national impact such as: navigation, fish habitat, water on federal lands (i.e. national parks, First Nations), boundary waters, and transboundary waters. Joint and/or overlapping jurisdiction occurs in areas relating to national water issues, interprovincial water issues, agriculture, and health. Federal drinking water guidelines play a major role in joint Canada-Saskatchewan funding of community water and sewer projects.<sup>34</sup>

Different realities exist among the Prairie Provinces in terms of natural water abundance, economic growth rates, and future plans. As a result, at times the provinces have differing views on how federal and provincial roles should be articulated and implemented. Saskatchewan relies heavily on the cooperation and participation of the federal government for policy and program delivery support in many areas, particularly at the interface between water and agriculture.

Federal support for major has occurred since the 1930s for water storage, irrigation development projects, and on-farm water supply assistance. More recently, SaskWater has worked extensively with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and this relationship continues through the SWA, with several key actions reported on and planned for the future.<sup>35</sup>

### 4.2 Other Provinces and States

Aside from the federally-coordinated provincial partnerships such as the Prairie Provinces Water Board and the International Joint Commission's basin boards (Souris River), SWA also participates on the Mackenzie River Basin Board with Canada, British Columbia, Alberta, the Northwest Territories and Yukon. The Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) and the Council of Fish and Aquaculture Ministers (CFAM) also involve Saskatchewan. SE is represented on both

### 4.3 Municipalities

SE works closely with SGR on centralized policy development (e.g. land use planning) and program delivery (e.g. federal-provincial water infrastructure). For such initiatives, and for the SDWS as a whole, substantial municipal consultations occur through the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Saskatchewan Environment (1999). *Water/Surface and Groundwater Protection/Integrated Water Management Framework*. Available: <http://www.se.gov.sk.ca/ecosystem/water/framework/> (Accessed 20 July 2005).

<sup>34</sup> Saskatchewan Environment (2005). *State of Drinking Water Quality in Saskatchewan and the SDWS: Annual Report 2004-05*. Queens Printer, Regina, SK. p. 11.

<sup>35</sup> Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (2005). *SWA 2005-2006 Provincial Budget Performance Plan*, Queen's Printer, Regina, SK. p. 11.

<sup>36</sup> Saskatchewan Environment (2005). *State of Drinking Water Quality in Saskatchewan and the SDWS: Annual Report 2004-05*. Queens Printer, Regina, SK. p. 3.

SWA works extensively with Saskatchewan's rural municipalities on drainage licensing and maintenance issues, and through the province's watershed associations and conservation and development authorities – both of which heavily involve rural government.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4.4 First Nations

There has been a strong focus on First Nations under the SDWS, with significant efforts delivered primarily through SaskWater, SGR, and the SWA.

SaskWater has provided technical assistance, training, and water system operator certification for dozens of First Nation communities, while SGR has worked Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and other partners to help focus a substantial amount of water and sewer infrastructure funding to northern Saskatchewan communities under the *Northern Sewer and Water Program*.<sup>38</sup>

SWA has also devoted almost 50% of its total water control infrastructure budget to northern Saskatchewan, and has invested considerable research and other support to the communities of Cumberland House and Cumberland House First Nation<sup>39</sup> – in the Saskatchewan River Delta, including during the early summer floods of 2005. Perhaps most significant is the fact that there are at least two First Nations people participating on the 18 member SWA Advisory Committee – either representing a First Nation community or as sitting members-at-large.

#### 4.5 SWA Advisory Committee

The SWA Advisory Committee is designed to represent many water stakeholders and the general public – to consider Saskatchewan's water challenges and opportunities and provide the SWA with sound guidance on its programming. Participants on the committee cover the full range of environmental and industrial interests in the province, with a focus on water, agriculture, wildlife, and recreational water use.<sup>40</sup>

#### 4.6 Public and Other

The 1994 *Water Management Framework* public consultation process involved the participation of more than 1000 residents and many organizations – in response to a government discussion paper titled *Water Management: Issues and Challenges*.<sup>41</sup>

The SWA is currently facilitating seven comprehensive watershed planning initiatives focused on building consensus among more than 400 people in 20 communities in southern and central Saskatchewan. A major public consultation process in support of *A Water Conservation Plan for Saskatchewan* has also been initiated by the SWA.

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<sup>37</sup> Ireland, Bryan (2005). Personal Communication.

<sup>38</sup> Saskatchewan Environment (2005). State of Drinking Water Quality in Saskatchewan and the SDWS: Annual Report 2004-05. Queens Printer, Regina, SK. p. 16.

<sup>39</sup> Saskatchewan Executive Council (2005). Watershed Authority Investing in North. 21 April 2005 News Release. Available: <http://www.gov.sk.ca/newsrel/releases/2005/04/21-334.html> (Accessed 28 July).

<sup>40</sup> Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (2005). About Us/Mission Statement and Mandate/Goals and Objectives. Available: <http://www.swa.ca/AboutUs/MissionStatement.asp?type=AdvisoryCommittee> (Accessed 11 July 2005).

<sup>41</sup> Saskatchewan Environment (1999). Water/Surface and Groundwater Protection/Water Management Framework. Available: <http://www.se.gov.sk.ca/ecosystem/water/framework/PAGE1.htm#Executive%20Summary> (Accessed 10 July 2005).

Today, via its [www.saskH2O.ca](http://www.saskH2O.ca) website, SE reports on current developments related to drinking water quality for most every domestic supply system in the province. Saskatchewan residents can view the latest water quality test results for their community's water and receive full information regarding water quality advisories and orders.

Saskatchewan Agrivision Corporation (SAC) has invested substantial time, effort, and resources in the preparation of a *50 Year Water Plan for Saskatchewan*. It calls for a new framework for water development in the province, including: improved federal-provincial cooperation, sustained funding for planning and development (via “comprehensive water development corporations”), and strengthened stakeholder participation (with the creation of the “Saskatchewan Water Council”). SAC recommends increased water storage locations province-wide, maximizing the wealth generated from water through value-added rural development and population growth, and maintaining “environmental basic flows” in all surface water systems.<sup>42</sup>

While SAC does not have water management responsibilities, the 50 year planning initiative did receive substantial federal support;<sup>43</sup> it is very conceivable that SAC's proposals have influenced Saskatchewan water policy to some degree.

#### 4.7 Watershed Management Partnerships

The SWA is currently facilitating comprehensive planning exercises in seven provincial watersheds in accordance with *A Watershed and Aquifer Planning Model for Saskatchewan*. The SWA will publish a framework for *State of Watershed Reporting* protocols for monitoring and assessment later this year.

The SWA is now working in the following sub-watersheds: North Saskatchewan River/Battle River; South Saskatchewan River; Upper Qu-Appelle River; Yorkton Aquifer; Upper Assiniboine River; Lower Souris River; and Moose Jaw River. Their work involves significant public consultation to review and build consensus around: *Issues, Objectives, Analysis, and Recommendations* in support of a complete watershed or aquifer management plan. The planning process utilizes two interrelated committees and dedicated SWA facilitation and support staff (planning team).<sup>44</sup>

##### *Watershed Advisory Committees*

In accordance with the SWA's planning model, staff support is provided to a *Watershed Advisory Committee* towards multi-stakeholder discussion and consensus on water management goals and objectives. A local watershed advisory committee may contain municipal, First Nation, irrigation district, watershed association<sup>45</sup>, and/or conservation area authority<sup>46</sup> personnel – who are there to represent their constituents and other residents of the watershed.

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<sup>42</sup> Saskatchewan Agrivision Corporation (2004). *Water Wealth: A Fifty Year Water Plan for Saskatchewan*, Regina, SK (Executive Summary), prepared by Clifton Associates Ltd., 12 p.

<sup>43</sup> Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (2004). *50 Year Water Plan Project Ready to Begin*. 23 February 2004 News Release. Available: [http://www.agr.gc.ca/cb/index\\_e.php?s1=n&s2=2004&page=n40223a](http://www.agr.gc.ca/cb/index_e.php?s1=n&s2=2004&page=n40223a) (Accessed 15 July 2005).

<sup>44</sup> Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (2003). *A Watershed and Aquifer Planning Model for Saskatchewan*. Moose Jaw, 12 p.

<sup>45</sup> The Watershed Associations Act (1978) permits two or more cooperating organizations (typically municipalities) to facilitate planning and development of land and water management activities for multiple environmental, wildlife, and recreational purposes. Available: <http://www.swa.ca/AboutUs/Legislation.asp>. (Accessed 5 July 2005).

### *Technical Committees*

With additional support from a government and agency *Technical Committee* comprised of federal and provincial government personnel, SWA staff, and other external agencies. Background information compiled by the technical committee will include an analysis of issues and threats, recommendations for action, management options, responsibilities, and accountability measures for plan implementation.

### *Planning Teams*

Two SWA staff are assigned to coordinate watershed planning activities. Their plan management responsibilities include:

- establishing the watershed advisory and technical teams;
- developing committee terms of reference;
- compiling background information;
- managing the public consultation process;
- documenting technical committee findings and consultation outcomes; and
- preparing the ultimate watershed plan.

### *The Process*

The primary focus of the SWA's watershed and aquifer planning efforts is to protect source water supplies, while additional issues of interest to local residents can also be incorporated. Public consultation plays a role in the process, although there is a strong focus on the fact that the advisory committee members lead the process, while it is the responsibility of the planning team to ensure the process is balanced and produces results.

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<sup>46</sup> The Conservation and Development Act (1978) permits rural landowners to establish a conservation and development area to facilitate the development and assessment-based funding of drainage and water control works. Available: <http://www.swa.ca/AboutUs/Legislation.asp> (Accessed 5 July 2005).

## 5. Implementation

The SDWS represents Saskatchewan’s immediate policy focus on drinking water quality, while the SWA is addressing the longer-term challenges of source water protection through watershed management – in addition to other water management goals. Progress to date is highlighted.

### 5.1 Specific Policy Instruments<sup>47, 48</sup>

Saskatchewan has applied a mix of policy instruments to support of its water strategy – including **institutional** instruments (strategies), **regulatory** (laws), **expenditure** (education/awareness, research/development), and some **economic** instruments (taxes/incentives). Several aspects of Saskatchewan’s water policy approach are:

Strategy Goal Areas	Key Policy Instruments	Status
1. <u>Drinking Water Systems</u> – Providing safe, clean, and sustainable drinking water systems (SDWS #1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water system operator certification (regulatory)</li> <li>• Systems licensed using Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines (regulatory)</li> <li>• Technical assistance and training provided to 54+ First Nations (expenditure)</li> <li>• Community water and sewer infrastructure development/mgmt. (expenditure)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ongoing</li> <li>• ongoing</li> <li>• ongoing</li> <li>• ongoing</li> </ul>
2. <u>Drinking Water Regulations</u> – Ensuing the drinking water regulatory system is clear and effective. (SDWS #2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compliance testing with bacteriological and disinfection standards (regulatory)</li> <li>• Bacteriological protocols revised and adopted (regulatory)</li> <li>• Advisories and orders communicated by province (regulatory)</li> <li>• System problems reported by providers (regulatory)</li> <li>• Construction permits issued upon system assessment (regulatory)</li> <li>• Penalties enforced (regulatory)</li> <li>• Laboratories accredited by Canadian Standards Council (regulatory)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ongoing</li> <li>• complete</li> <li>• as required</li> <li>• upon occurrence</li> <li>• upon assessment</li> <li>• upon failure to fulfill a ministerial order</li> <li>• complete</li> </ul>
3. <u>Protecting Source Water</u> – Protecting high quality source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Source water protection planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• based on priority watersheds</li> </ul>

<sup>47</sup> Saskatchewan Environment (2005). State of Drinking Water Quality in Saskatchewan and the SDWS: Annual Report 2004-05. Queen’s Printer, Regina, SK. p. 5-7

<sup>48</sup> Saskatchewan Watershed Authority (2005). SWA 2004-2005 Annual Report. Queen’s Printer, Regina, SK. p. 7-9.

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<p>water supplies into the future (SDWS #3)</p>	<p>(institutional)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voluntary stewardship agreements (institutional)</li> <li>• Equivalent environmental farm planning (institutional)</li> <li>• Intensive livestock legislation (regulatory)</li> <li>• Manure management research (expenditure)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ongoing</li> <li>• initiated</li> <li>• ongoing (since 1971)</li> <li>• ongoing (Ag &amp; Food)</li> </ul>
<p>4. <u>Building Trust</u>– Building a high level of trust and value among citizens who consume drinking water supplies (SDWS #4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public perception monitored (expenditure)</li> <li>• Public release of water information by system providers (institutional)</li> <li>• Coordinated water system information available via provincial website (expenditure)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ongoing</li> <li>• growing</li> <li>• in operation</li> </ul>
<p>5. <u>Water Management</u> – Ensuring Saskatchewan’s water management infrastructure (i.e. dams and distribution networks are safe, effective, and sustainable (SWA #1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dam repairs completed (expenditure)</li> <li>• Infrastructure risk ratio monitored (institutional)</li> <li>• Water allocation concerns to industry addressed (institutional)</li> <li>• First Nation water management concerns addresses or explored (institutional)</li> <li>• Conservation strategy proposed (institutional)</li> <li>• Flood risks assessed (expenditure)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• as required, according to budget</li> <li>• ongoing</li> <li>• as required</li> <li>• ongoing</li> <li>• initiated</li> <li>• complete</li> </ul>
<p>6. <u>Healthy Watersheds</u> – Maintaining healthy watersheds and aquifers through source water protection planning and public awareness (SWA #2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watershed planning committees established (institutional)</li> <li>• State of the Watershed Report indicators drafted (institutional)</li> <li>• North American Waterfowl Mgmt. Plan proposals approved (expenditure)</li> <li>• Stewardship education training (expenditure)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• initiated</li> <li>• initiated</li> <li>• upon review</li> <li>• ongoing</li> </ul>

### 5.2 Funding

Funding across the departments participating the SDWS is in the range of \$20M per year. These funds are approved as part of the annual budget estimates process – based on the SDWS Performance Plan, as coordinated and drafted by SE.

SWA funding is currently also in the \$20M range, approximately one third of which comes from Saskatchewan Environment. The remaining amount is funded largely through water use fees, primarily through direct payments to SWA from SaskPower (since 2002). From 1987 to 2002, SaskPower paid these fees directly to SaskWater; prior to 1987, they were paid to Saskatchewan’s General Revenue Fund.

## 6. Monitoring and Review

Under Saskatchewan’s *Accountability Framework*, monitoring and review has become a central focus for all government operations, with the annual budget estimates process largely driven by the annual performance plans of all departments and other agencies (including crown corporations and key cross-government strategies).

Saskatchewan departments and agencies prepare annual performance plans outlining their long-term goals and objectives, as well as a series of performance measures (including baseline data) – which assist in government decision-making, and help Saskatchewan citizens monitor government progress. Annual reports serve to compare actual results compared to plans.

Saskatchewan has a strong commitment to the SDWS and there has been measurable progress in the province’s efforts to ensure that drinking water supplies are safe. The SDWS was announced in April 2002 and is currently targeted for completion by March 31 2007, although it is expected to continue to meet new priorities. The province has met and/or made solid progress on the strategy’s annual performance targets in accordance with Saskatchewan’s Accountability Framework Reporting Guidelines.<sup>49</sup>

The longer-term work of the SWA – in support of source water protection through watershed management planning is just beginning.

Table XX. Water-related Indicators for Saskatchewan

Document	Indicator Elements	Time-bound Targets
SDWS 2005-2006 Performance Plan  Goal #1 – Providing safe, clean, and sustainable drinking water systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of communities with human consumptive waterworks whose operators have received certification</li> <li>• % of facilities that meet bacteriological guidelines 90% of the time</li> </ul>	<p>No Published; continuous progress through annual review – currently at 54.3%</p> <p>Not Published; continuous progress through annual review – currently at 91.4%</p>

<sup>49</sup> Saskatchewan Finance (2005). Accountability Framework/Performance Plans/Reporting Guidelines. Available: <http://www.gov.sk.ca/finance/accountability/2006/performanceplans.htm> (Accessed 19 September 2005).

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of waterworks (regulated by SE) that meet disinfection requirements 90% of the time</li> <li>• Number of waterworks that do not meet SE's minimum treatment requirements</li> <li>• Number of municipalities with pricing and capital investment policies in place for their waterworks</li> </ul>	<p>Not Published; continuous progress through annual review – currently at 86.5%</p> <p>Not Published; continuous progress through annual review – currently at 23 systems (before regulatory changes and 2 systems after regulatory changes)</p> <p>Not Published; continuous progress through annual review – currently below 5% - requirements not yet in effect</p>
<p>SDWS 2005-2006 Performance Plan</p> <p>Goal #2 – Ensuring the drinking water regulatory system is clear and effective</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of accredited drinking water testing laboratories</li> <li>• Number of sewage effluent discharges that represent a risk to source waters</li> </ul>	<p>Not Published; continuous progress through annual review – current at 6</p> <p>Not Published; continuous progress through annual review – currently at 93</p>
<p>SDWS 2005-2006 Performance Plan</p> <p>Goal #3 – Protecting high quality source water supplies into the future</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of municipalities with by-laws in place to protect drinking water supplies</li> <li>• Water Quality Index ratings for watersheds in SK</li> </ul>	<p>Not Published; continuous progress through annual review – currently at 19% (153 of 809 municipalities)</p> <p>Not Published; continuous progress through annual review – various results in 9 watersheds</p>
<p>SDWS 2005-2006 Performance Plan</p> <p>Goal #4 – Building a high level of trust and value among citizens who consume drinking water supplies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of survey respondents indicating that they are willing to pay more for their drinking water</li> <li>• % of survey respondents indicating that they are very or somewhat confident in the quality of their tap water</li> <li>• Average per capita consumption of</li> </ul>	<p>Not Published; continuous progress through annual review – currently at 61.9%</p> <p>Not Published; continuous progress through annual review – currently at 87%</p> <p>Not Published; continuous progress through annual review –</p>

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	water (ga/day)	currently at 82.5 ga/day
SWA 2005-2006 Performance Plan Goal #1 – Ensuring Saskatchewan’s water mgmt. infrastructure are safe, effective, and sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk ratio for provincial water management infrastructure</li> <li>• Number of dams requiring significant upgrades to meet safety standards</li> </ul>	<p>None; continuous progress through annual review – currently at 0.147</p> <p>None; continuous progress through annual review – currently at 27 (of 45 or 60%) - check</p>
SWA 2005-2006 Performance Plan Goal #1 (con’t)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of detailed assessments conducted on water allocations for industrial projects</li> <li>• Number of urban municipalities adopting acceptable flood hazard zoning by-laws</li> <li>• % of flood susceptibility studies on new subdivisions forwarded to SGR within 30 days</li> </ul>	<p>None; continuous progress through annual review – currently at 0</p> <p>None; continuous progress through annual review – currently at 16</p> <p>None; continuous progress through annual review – currently at 34%</p>
SWA 2005-2006 Performance Plan Goal #2 – Maintaining healthy watersheds and aquifers through source protection planning and public awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of completed watershed and aquifer plans</li> <li>• Water Quality Index ratings for watersheds in SK</li> <li>• Number of teachers attending Project WET and Project WILD workshops annually</li> </ul>	<p>None; continuous progress through annual review – currently at 0 (7 in development)</p> <p>None; continuous progress through annual review – various results across 9 watersheds</p> <p>None; continuous progress through annual review – currently at 128 (WET) and 196 (WILD)</p>

### 6.3 Review and Improvement

While the Saskatchewan performance management system appears to be solid and is certainly institutionalized, it is too early to determine if significant progress is being made, aside from the clear regulatory-related performance on water quality.

## **7. Saskatchewan Interview Contacts**

We wish to thank the following government personnel for their assistance with the preparation of this case study through providing interview time, direction, and commenting on drafts of this study:

Blackwell, Ron – Manager, Policy, Planning and Quality Management: SaskWater

Carles, Bob – Vice President, Stewardship: Saskatchewan Watershed Authority

Ferris, Sam – Director, Drinking Water Quality: Saskatchewan Environment

Hanley, Terry – Director, Watershed Monitoring: SK Watershed Authority

Hjertaas, Dale – Executive Director, Policy and Communications: SK Watershed Authority

Ireland, Bryan – Vice President, Operations: Saskatchewan Watershed Authority

Jansen, Andy – Manager, Agriculture Operations: SK Agriculture and Food

Tod, Robin – Manager – Watershed and Aquifer Planning: SK Watershed Authority