



ALBERTA WATER COUNCIL

Protecting Sources of Drinking Water in Alberta Project

BACKGROUND

- Drinking water providers in Alberta strive to provide access to clean and safe drinking water at affordable rates. Growing populations, aging infrastructure, land use decisions, climate change and limited water supplies have increased the need for a more integrated approach to protect sources of drinking water, reduce public health risks and minimize the costs of water treatment. In 2018, the Government of Alberta asked the Alberta Water Council (AWC) to form a multi-sector project team to document existing source water protection (SWP) approaches and provide guidance for protecting sources of drinking water in Alberta.
- The team developed two documents which were endorsed by the AWC, "*Protecting Sources of Drinking Water in Alberta: Guide to Source Water Protection Planning*" outlines six steps with supporting tools, case studies, and resources on how to protect drinking water sources. The six steps are:
 - involve key groups and create a vision
 - characterize your source water area
 - set goals
 - develop an action plan
 - implement the action plan
 - evaluate and revise periodically
- The guide is intended for public, private, and individual drinking water providers and should be used together with the companion document *Protecting Sources of Drinking Water in Alberta*. Indigenous communities, Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils, Watershed Stewardship Groups, and others may also find this guide and companion document useful.
- These resources support the *Water for Life Strategy, Our Water, Our Future: A Plan for Action* as well as regional planning and other initiatives.
- As of 2013, drinking water providers regulated by Alberta Environment and Parks are required to develop Drinking Water Safety Plans (DWSPs). DWSPs proactively assess risks to the source, treatment, storage and distribution of drinking water. SWP planning is complementary to DWSPs and can help drinking water providers in Alberta manage source water risks through a voluntary, collaborative approach.

- SWP plans are voluntary and do not replace DWSPs that are mandatory for systems regulated by Alberta Environment and Parks. SWP is the first line of defence in a multi-barrier approach and is a component of broader water management as a cost-effective way to ensure safe and secure water quality and quantity.
- SWP aims to maintain or improve the conditions of water through proactive, collaborative identification, validation, assessment, and management of risk. The quality and quantity of drinking water is influenced by activities that occur in a source water area in proximity to drinking water systems.
- SWP is a site-specific and place-based process that will differ for each source water area, and depend on the drinking water source, local conditions, and key players, among other factors.
- Key findings from this project highlighted the need to:
 - find a champion to lead the SWP planning process with key groups
 - align SWP plans with municipal, watershed and regional planning processes
 - bolster collaboration among drinking water providers, government, watershed groups, Indigenous communities and other key groups
 - secure funding, technical expertise, and tools to support SWP planning and implementation of protection measures
 - raise public awareness on the importance of protecting drinking water sources
- Protecting sources of drinking water is challenging, particularly for smaller drinking water providers that may not have the capacity or resources to spearhead a SWP initiative on their own. However, drinking water providers and others can pool their resources to address common risks in their source water areas.

The documents, a [video](#) instructing how to use the guide, and information about the project is available here (<https://www.awchome.ca/projects/protecting-sources-drinking-water-alberta-2/>).

Further information about the AWC and our many interesting projects are available on our website, www.awchome.ca.

The Alberta Water Council (AWC) is a collaborative partnership that provides leadership, expertise, and sector knowledge and perspectives to help governments, Indigenous Peoples, industry, and non-governmental organizations to advance the outcomes of Water for Life. It advises the Government of Alberta on matters pertaining to the successful achievement of the outcomes of the Water for Life strategy and on effective water resources management policies, practices, and tools.

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