



Water Words & Acronyms

- **AWC (Alberta Water Council):** a multi-stakeholder partnership between the Government of Alberta and stakeholders. It oversees implementation of Alberta's *Water for Life* strategy.
- **Aquatic Environment:** related to, living in or located in or on water or the beds or shores of a water body, including but not limited to (a) all organic and inorganic matter, and (b) living organisms and their habitat including fish habitat, and their interacting natural systems (from Alberta's *Water Act*).
- **Bog:** a wetland area that is acidic in nature (approximate pH 3.5-4.7), made up of deep layers of partially decomposed plants – primarily sphagnum moss. Also called a muskeg, this type of wetland depends mostly on run-off to maintain water levels.
- **Fen:** a wetland area that is more basic in nature than a bog (approximate pH 5.5 - 7.0) and made up of primarily grasses and sedges. It gets most of its water from groundwater rich in calcium and magnesium.
- **IFN (Instream Flow Needs):** the scientifically determined quantity of water and water quality conditions and the flow regimes needed to sustain river processes and associated ecosystems over the long term.
- **Instream Objective:** a desired level of flow or water quality that has been established in consideration of both instream and withdrawal (e.g. municipal, irrigation, industry) needs. It is expected that Water Conservation Objectives will replace the use of Instream Objectives when determined.
- **IWMP (Integrated Watershed Management Plan):** a collaboratively developed plan designed to protect, maintain and where possible, restore a healthy watershed.
- **Inter-basin Transfer:** when water from one major river basin (watershed) is redirected to another by some means.
- **Marsh:** a wetland area where shallow water collects for all or part of the year, typically surrounded by cattails, sedges and willows. Marshes have an external source of water such as streams or groundwater. Also known as a pond, slough or prairie pothole.
- **Natural Flow:** the flow in rivers that would have occurred in the absence of any man-made effects on flow.

- **PPWB (Prairie Provinces Water Board):** An inter-jurisdictional board that oversees water apportionment on the prairies, as well as promoting continued cooperation and consultation among the three provinces and Canada on water matters.
- **Riparian Zone:** the green ribbons of lush vegetation located adjacent to rivers, creeks, lakes, springs, wetlands and coulees that are the transition zone between the upland and aquatic ecosystems.
- **Water Allocation:** the volume, rate and timing of a diversion of water (from Alberta's *Water Act*).
- **Water Allocation Transfer:** occurs when the holder of an existing water license agrees to provide all or part of the allocation to another person or organization with approval from Alberta Environment.
- **Water Apportionment:** the equitable sharing of available water supply. In the case of the Prairie Provinces this is arranged through the *Master Agreement on Water Apportionment*.
- **WCOs (Water Conservation Objectives):** flow targets for the amount and quality of water to remain in the river for the protection of a natural water body or its aquatic environment, protection of tourism, recreational, transportation or waste assimilation uses of water, or management of fish or wildlife. It may include water necessary for the rate of flow of water or water level requirements (from Alberta's *Water Act*).
- **WFL (Water for Life):** the Government of Alberta's water management approach that outlines specific strategies and actions to address the province's water issues.
- **Watershed:** a region of land from which water drains into a water body.
- **WPAC (Watershed Planning & Advisory Council):** a multi-stakeholder Council that works with the Alberta government in a lead role to undertake watershed planning, develop best management practices, foster stewardship activities, report on the state of the watershed, and educate users of the water resource. The NSWA is the official WPAC for the North Saskatchewan River watershed in Alberta.
- **Water Quality Guidelines:** scientifically determined maximum allowable concentrations of substances for a particular water use such as livestock watering, human consumption, surface water recreation or swimming.
- **WQOs (Water Quality Objectives):** the concentrations of substances permissible for all intended water uses at a specific location on a body of water. The objectives are based on the water quality guidelines for the uses at that location, as well as on public input and socio-economic considerations.
- **WSG (Watershed Stewardship Group):** a local "grassroots" group or organization that shares information and takes action to protect and enhance a local watershed.