



NEWS RELEASE

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Report outlines criteria critical to sustaining aquatic ecosystems

Edmonton ... The Alberta Water Council is recommending some science-based criteria to sustain Alberta's aquatic ecosystems, which can lead to improved planning and decision-making around land and water management across the province.

The Alberta Water Council's report, *Provincial Ecological Criteria for Healthy Aquatic Ecosystems*, released January 15, outlines seven criteria to help identify critical areas, such as key headwaters and important wildlife habitat, needed to sustain Alberta's aquatic ecosystems. The criteria can serve as a foundation to improve decision-making by governments, conservation groups, landowners and others living and working in any of Alberta's watersheds. The work also supports the improved integration of land and water use planning across the province.

The criteria were developed following the Systematic Conservation Planning (SCP) methodology – a science-based, geospatial environmental evaluation process used in land use and environmental planning. Applying this process to aquatic ecosystems is a relatively new approach in Canada.

“This report is the first step in a very important process to better identify those areas that support Alberta's aquatic ecosystems,” said Gord Edwards, Executive Director of the Alberta Water Council. “By establishing some science-based criteria, we now have a strong foundation for developing practical management tools that can be applied to land use and watershed planning in Alberta.”

Healthy aquatic ecosystems is one of the three key goals of the province's water strategy – *Water for Life: A Strategy for Sustainability* – along with safe, secure drinking water and reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy.

“This report supports our work to protect and maintain the health of Alberta's aquatic ecosystems,” said Rob Renner, Minister of Environment. “The collaboration and hard work of the Alberta Water Council is critical to our success in achieving the goals of *Water for Life*.”

Copies of the report, which outline the specific criteria and more information on the Alberta Water Council can be found at www.albertawatercouncil.ca.

Established in 2004, the Alberta Water Council is a multi-stakeholder partnership with 24 members from governments, industry, and non-government organizations. Its primary task is to monitor and steward implementation of Alberta's Water for Life strategy and to champion the achievement of the strategy's three outcomes of a safe, secure drinking water supply, healthy aquatic ecosystems, and reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy.

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