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Alberta Water Council Update

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In late November 2007, AWA participated in its first meeting as a Board member of the Alberta Water Council. The Council is a key multi-stakeholder policy advisory group to the Alberta government on the *Water for Life* policy. AWA will work closely with the other environmental NGO members of the Water Council to ensure a strong consistent voice for better aquatic ecosystem protection.

On January 30, the Water Council released its *Water for Life* renewal recommendations to the Government of Alberta. AWA is encouraged by the Council's call for adequate funding of *Water for Life* and by the strong consensus that emerged on the importance of safeguarding Alberta's source water and aquatic ecosystems.

As well, the Council has indicated it will support and encourage provincial government actions toward strong integration of land and water management. In October 2007, as part of the Land-Use Framework process, Sustainable Resource Development released the results of a spring 2007 public survey on land-use issues. This report revealed a striking level of public concern over water protection. More than 3,100 Albertans completed the survey. The issue receiving the highest number of "very concerned" responses, over 70 percent, was the "failure to consider the impacts on the water supply during land-use planning."

Another extremely important initiative of the Water Council is developing recommendations for a province-wide wetlands policy. Currently no wetlands policy exists to provide direction for wetland conservation in the Green Area – the huge, mostly non-settled public lands areas of Alberta's boreal forest and mountain foothills. According to the Alberta Water Council's wetland consultation workbook published in September 2007, "the rate of wetland loss in the Green Area is unknown." In February 2008 the Council will consider draft recommendations from its Wetlands Policy Project Team.

