



Issue #10

Prairie Provinces Water Board (PPWB)

Information current as of: November 2005

Summary and Current Status:

In 1948, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Canada formed the Prairie Provinces Water Board (PPWB) to recommend the best use of interprovincial water and recommend water allocations between the provinces. Board activities are guided by the 1969 Master Agreement on Apportionment.

Elements:

The Prairie Provinces Water Board Agreement was signed on July 28, 1948 by Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Canada with the aim of resolving conflicts between upstream uses and downstream needs.

Mandate of the Prairie Provinces Water Board:

- to ensure eastward flowing interprovincial streams are, in accordance with the provisions of the PPWB Master Agreement on Apportionment, shared equitably
- that water quality at interprovincial boundaries is maintained at acceptable levels, and
- to facilitate a cooperative approach for the integrated development and management of interprovincial streams and aquifers, to ensure their sustainability.

In the 1960s, when the provinces began requesting large allocations of water, the approach used by the Board became inadequate in terms of allowing long-term water planning by the provinces. Accordingly, a new system for sharing this limited resource was developed – The Master Agreement on Apportionment

The Master Agreement on Apportionment is based on the principle of equal sharing of available water in the prairies. The formula contained within it states that Alberta and Saskatchewan may each take up to one half of the natural flow of water originating within its boundaries and one half of the flow entering the province. The remainder is left to flow into Manitoba. The provinces have discretion as to decisions about how they will use their share of water.

The PPWB is comprised of 2 representatives from Environment Canada (Chair and Secretary), 1 representative from the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA), and 1 representative each from the governments of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. The Board prepares reports and recommendations on water sharing, and is also responsible for promoting continued cooperation and consultation among the three provinces and Canada on water matters.

The PPWB has three permanent committees comprised of representatives from provincial and federal agencies that assist in technical work and provide advice to the board.

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- **The Committee on Hydrology** – studies questions related to the quantity of water in streams crossing provincial borders; reviews natural flow calculations for use in the Master Agreement's formula
- **The Committee on Water Quality** – coordinates the PPWB water quality monitoring program, addresses issues about the quality of water crossing interprovincial borders, is responsible for the Water Quality Contingency Plan (keeps downstream water users informed of any contaminant spills or unusual water quality conditions)
- **The Committee on Groundwater** – deals with questions related to the use and the quality of groundwater shared by the provinces

Environment Canada is involved in fulfilling the monitoring conditions described under the Master Agreement on Apportionment and provides information from 75 long-term water quantity-monitoring stations, 16 meteorological stations and 12 water quality-monitoring sites. Other agencies provide information from an additional 13 water quantity monitoring stations. Five of the water quantity stations are also used for international apportionment calculations. The information collected at these stations is used to calculate natural flows and the levels of water quality parameters.

Key Publication(s) & Links:

- Prairie Provinces Water Board (PPWB)
<http://www.pnr-rpn.ec.gc.ca/water/fa01/index.en.html>
- PPWB Master Agreement on Apportionment
http://www.iigr.ca/pdf/documents/1348_Master_Agreement_on_App.pdf
- Water Quality Monitoring Sites under the PPWB
<http://www.pnr-rpn.ec.gc.ca/water/fa01/fa01s38.en.html>

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