



Water Security Agency (WSA) Water Management Policy – Committee Feedback

WSA joined the APAS Land and Environment Committee on Nov 18, 2022, as a part of their consultations for the made-in-Saskatchewan water management policy desired outcomes. The vision is responsible agricultural water management supporting a resilient and thriving Saskatchewan.

Agri-environmental priorities of the Agricultural Water Management Strategy include Flood mitigation, drought response, and adaptation; Water quality; Wetland habitat; Soil health and Greenhouse gas management

Discussion & Presentation

What do we envision for SK's agricultural economy?

- APAS's vision is for a respected thriving agricultural sector.
- Need to ensure that farmers are able to properly extract value and monetize their land. This economic viability is what is going to support small and medium sized farms, as well as allow for farmers to continue good stewardship practices.

What do we envision for SK's water bodies in terms of water quality?

- The committee mentioned that this is a largely variable question, as 'good quality water' differs depending on who is using that water.
- Suitable quality and quantity of water for livestock is important but needs to be an adaptive approach to meet different goals and needs across the province.

What do we envision for SK's water quantity?

- Similar to water quality, this is a moving benchmark, the goal is to avoid drought as well as flooding.
- The key word to this, and the previous, question is 'adaptive' and that a province wide water policy won't work, it has to be regionally as well as temporally adaptive.
- There seems to be a lack of accurate data on how much water is held in wetlands across Saskatchewan, most data is only two dimensional – not including depth or seasonal changes in wetlands.

What do we envision for SK's wildlife resources?

- Noted that excess water degrades wildlife habitat as does lack of water.
- Ag land beyond wetlands supports wildlife and that producers should be compensated for this, as well as compensation for retaining wildlife habitat.
- Land set aside for wildlife is not always properly managed by those groups that hold it and it results in unintended species flourishing and causing problems rather than helping.



What do we envision for SK's communities?

- Economically healthy farms lead to healthy communities, water quality and wildlife.
- Communities do better when policies that apply to them are developed at a local level, rather than applied top down.

Summary Items and Key Issues

- **Continued collaboration:** APAS welcomes continued input and collaboration on the development of WSA's Water Management policies.
- **Principles for Effective Water Management:** The potential for external controls on land use, such as offsets or set aside requirements, is an important component of this strategy that presents challenges for producers. APAS has Standing Policy on water management that outline several principles for effective water management, including:
 - **Data-based Decisions-** There is a need for more resources and collaboration dedicated to the mapping of modeling of watershed basins – decisions must be supported with sound and available data
 - **Recognition for Ecological Goods & Services-** The Policy should recognize the need for financial compensation for landowners and producers who are managing and retaining water for the public good. This is a very important condition for effective water management that needs to be further elaborated in the WSA policy. An ALUS based model to provide producers with funds has shown to be effective in other jurisdictions.
 - **Effective Governance-** There is a need for provincial assistance and collaboration to support the continued viability of community watershed organizations, including opportunities for producer engagement in water governance and all stages of policy development.
- **Stakeholder Interests:** The WSA policy is being developed with broad stakeholder engagement, yet it appears to lack a clear distinction between stakeholder's different interests in the outcomes of the policy. This is particularly important for landowners and agricultural producers who are the most closely and directly impacted by water management regulation and policy decisions. There was discussion about the potential use of term, "surface right holders", to more accurately describe the direct interests that producers and other landowners have in both land-use discretion and the economic value of their assets.
- **Need to keep the strategy focused –** The desired outcome section of the policy needs to provide clear, science-based rationale as to how the strategy will contribute to different goals and objectives. For instance, greenhouse gas mitigation is included as an outcome with no accompanying rationale for how the strategy will reduce emissions.

More Information

If you have any questions about the above items or wish to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at 306-789-7774 ext 4, or email policy@apas.ca.