



Agriculture is Everyone's Business

APAS Approach to Water Management

Water has become a very divisive issue for the province and the issue has become personal for many. Some organizations have attempted to raise the rhetoric and further inflame opinion. This makes discussion, negotiation and compromise very difficult. A key element of any move forward in the discussion must be to lower the temperature of the debate. Government leadership on water management is required - now.

APAS supports:

- the development of a comprehensive plan for water management that includes full mapping /modelling for water basins so that flows of water are understood;
- Science and detailed measurement must be utilized to make fact based decisions;
- Clearly defined rules and penalties established through legislation, regulation and policy that sets out expectations for landowners and others managing water;
- Economic support for individuals that manage water (creating surge capacity or leaving land permanently flooded) for the public good; and
- Management of water to optimize surface and ground water conservation and quality.

Landowners need to have expectations and responsibilities clearly defined for managing excess water. Rules and processes need to be grounded in common sense and objectives achievable with a goal of enhancing our capacity to deal with periods of excessive moisture/drought while limiting the adverse impacts. In years of excess moisture we must grow our ability to maximize water flows through existing systems and to expand storage capacity to make our rivers less flood prone.

APAS supports dealing with flooding as a comprehensive policy and drainage as a component of this issue. For drainage, APAS supports:

- All producers who are draining to be licensed;
- Any licensed drainage must be able to restrict water outflows;
- Any licensed drainage to require an approved operational plan
- Compliance and operation of water being actively enforced;
- Use of sustainable best management practices (example grassed waterways); and
- Compensation being provided to producers who hold water either because drainage is not done or that water release is controlled.

For decision making, APAS supports streamlining and elimination of overlap and competing objectives (governance, legislation, regulation and policy). Also supported is investment in information and data assembly and management; institutional structures; and on the ground



resources to deliver a water management plan. The role of local groups; Watershed Authorities, Conservation and Development districts and producers need to be clearly spelled out so that they can be confident that they have sufficient tools and authority to implement their function. How decisions and processes will be made and by who must be clearly detailed.

Changing how water is managed in Saskatchewan will require significant resources. Putting rules in place to require licensing without the capacity to oversee and manage water as it leaves the farm will mean that producers will go through the licensing exercise and there may well be no meaningful reduction in the impacts that are occurring downstream. This could occur if the timing of water release is not managed appropriately or if drainage was not a key factor in the flooding risk – sometimes nothing can prevent flooding. Human resources both within and outside government will be required to effectively eliminate the backlog of projects that have taken place over decades.

As well, investment in physical structures (dams, channels etc.) that increase our capacity to store and manage this valuable resource must also be expanded. As a province we need to view water as a key economic driver that needs to be managed, to the greatest benefit possible, during both surplus and drought.