

Bulletin 2023-43

December 12, 2023

Water Shortage Advisories in Alberta – Important Information for Water Licence Holders

Alberta is experiencing extremely low water levels in many parts of the province due to below-average snowpack and precipitation over the past several months, resulting in less runoff to rivers, lakes, and reservoirs. This is contributing to widespread dry conditions and water shortages, especially in southern Alberta. With a high probability of a strong El Niño event this winter (resulting in lower precipitation and higher temperatures), there is a strong likelihood of low flows and low water levels persisting into the 2024 calendar year. Go to www.alberta.ca/drought to learn more about drought, current conditions, and advisories.

We do not know yet whether this drought will become a multiyear event, consequently industry operational preparedness is vital. Industry should be aware of active water shortage advisories and plan accordingly when applying for a temporary water licence under the *Water Act*. Existing industry licensees must be diligent about adhering to the conditions in their water licences so that they do not exceed their withdrawal limits. It is the responsibility of the water licence holder to understand and follow the terms and conditions of their licence, particularly conditions involving low flow restrictions. Water shortage advisories are reported publicly by the Government of Alberta at <https://rivers.alberta.ca>.

We are working closely with the Government of Alberta as we evaluate and monitor the situation through a network of province-wide water level and snowpack measuring stations. Mitigation measures may vary depending on location and based on how much snow and rain the province receives. We will work together with partners and industry water users to help manage the situation. Industry should be proactive and plan for water shortages during 2024, including conserving water in their operations now.

For the South Saskatchewan River Basin, where the situation is more severe, the AER will reach out to industry licence holders this winter to seek estimates of their 2024 future water demand. Licensees at risk of not being able to divert water in 2024 should prepare contingency plans. Licensees can schedule meetings with the AER to review their mitigation plans and the potential use of tools available under the *Water Act*, which are also outlined in the Alberta drought website (www.alberta.ca/drought).

If you have any questions, contact our Customer Contact Centre by phone at 1-855-297-8311 or by email at [inquiries@aer.ca](mailto:inquiries@ aer.ca).