

# Bulletin 2020-25

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## Implementing the *Water Conservation Policy for Upstream Oil and Gas Operations*

On December 1, 2020, Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) released the *Water Conservation Policy for Upstream Oil and Gas Operations (WCP)*, replacing the *Water Conservation and Allocation Policy for Oilfield Injection (2006)*. The *WCP*, which provides direction on water use, applies to the following energy subsectors:

- 1) oil sands thermal in situ operations,
- 2) enhanced oil recovery and cold bitumen enhanced recovery operations,
- 3) multistage hydraulic fracturing in horizontal wells, and
- 4) oil sands mining operations.

The *WCP* emphasizes the use of alternative water sources, including alternative nonsaline water (e.g., industrial wastewater, water from tailings ponds), over high-quality nonsaline water (e.g., lake or river water). This will reduce reliance on high-quality nonsaline water now and into the future.

We are currently developing the guidance document to implement the *WCP* for the first three subsectors listed above, which we expect to release in early 2021. Until then, applicants for *Water Act* licences in these subsectors should use the AEP's *Water Conservation and Allocation Guideline for Oilfield Injection (2006)*.

No changes are planned for oil sands mining operations. Nonsaline water allocation for oil sands mining will continue to follow the *Surface Water Quantity Management Framework for the Lower Athabasca River* and the *Tailings Management Framework for the Mineable Athabasca Oil Sands*.

The new policy also does not affect our application process. Companies are to continue to use the [Application for Water Act Licences](#) form and submit the completed form to [EPEA.WA.Applications@aer.ca](mailto:EPEA.WA.Applications@aer.ca).

For questions about the *WCP*, contact Steve Wallace at AEP by email to [Steve.Wallace@gov.ab.ca](mailto:Steve.Wallace@gov.ab.ca).

For *WCP*-related questions on water licence applications, email [EPEA.WA.Applications@aer.ca](mailto:EPEA.WA.Applications@aer.ca).