
PARLBY CREEK - BUFFALO LAKE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

BUFFALO LAKE STABILIZATION COMPONENT

What's Happening Around The Lake?

In response to local requests to stabilize water levels in Buffalo Lake and to bring an assured water supply to the villages of Alix and Mirror, Alberta Environment recently announced plans to pump water from the Red Deer River through a conveyance system consisting of pipeline, canal and continuation of channel improvements to Parlby Creek. Specific objectives of the development project are:

- providing an assured water supply for Alix and Mirror;
- enhancing recreational opportunities at Buffalo Lake by stabilizing the variable lake levels; and
- continuing agricultural benefits along Parlby Creek and Spotted Lake.

Prior to making a decision the Minister of Environment called for an independent study of the project. Environmental Management Associates has been commissioned to conduct a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on the Parlby Creek, Buffalo Lake Development Project. The study will follow guidelines developed by Alberta Environment for resource development projects.

What Are The Objectives Of The Study?

The Parlby Creek / Buffalo Lake EIA is being prepared to provide information to the public on the extent and significance of the project's potential environmental impacts on the area. One aspect of the analysis is to identify mitigation measures that may be applied to offset any undesirable impacts and data gaps that limit the study team's ability to assess impacts.

The EIA Study Team:

The team of consultants and professional scientists conducting the EIA study includes:

- Environmental Management Associates (EMA), will manage the study and undertake the wildlife, fisheries and historical resource components of the EIA
- HydroQual Consultants Inc. will complete the water quality and limnological assessments;
- W-E-R Engineering Ltd. will conduct the surface water assessment of the project;
- Golder Associates, will complete the ground water analysis of the Buffalo Lake area;
- Dimensions Planning, will conduct the socio-economic assessment as part of the EIA;
- Thompson Economic Consulting Services, will develop the cost-benefit analysis of the project; and
- Western Environment and Social Trends, will be responsible for issue scoping and public consultation components of the project.

A review of the extensive existing literature on wildlife, aquatic life, water quality and vegetation is currently in progress. New computer-based water quality analysis, using the latest water quality and hydrologic regime information, is being conducted. This will incorporate the range of data presented in previous studies, and new information obtained from field data.

Once the results of computer predictions have been assessed, an up-to-date assessment of impacts can be made and/or data deficiencies identified. Thus, potential mitigation measures can be based on realistic scenarios.

Work on the socio-economic study and cost-benefit analysis has also begun. Interviews with regional and local groups and officials are under way.

A representative group of about 30 people have been interviewed as part of the initial issue scoping to identify views and concerns with respect to the project. Visits also have been made to groups and individuals to discuss ideas, opportunities and issues of concern. The purpose of this consultation was not to determine how many people favour or oppose the project, but rather to scope out the range of issues which should be addressed in the environmental impact assessment.

What We Heard From You

Issues, concerns and aspirations raised during the preliminary issue scoping include the following:

- concerns about erosion along the Parlby Creek channel;
- possible impacts on waterfowl which use Buffalo Lake as a staging area;
- water quality and quantity impacts on the Red Deer River as a result of diverting water;
- concern about project impacts on agricultural practices in the Parlby Creek area;
- mitigation of environmental impacts along Parlby Creek through proper channelization and water flow management;
- concern about possible algal blooms on Buffalo Lake;
- potential benefits of tourism resulting from stabilizing Buffalo Lake water levels; and
- the need for accurate project information and the opportunity for the public to make their views known.

How To Get Involved?

The project study team want all area residents and interested groups and individuals to be fully informed and to have an opportunity to express their views about the project.

This is the first in a series of news updates which will be distributed over the next few months to provide information on the study findings.

At present, EIA terms of reference are available for public review. The public is invited to comment on these prior to December 31, 1989.

Once the draft EIA is completed in 1990, the document also will be available for public review. This constitutes the second stage of the process. The public will be invited to comment on the document and participate in an open house and public meeting. Public notices of time and place will be advertised in the local media. The open house will provide an opportunity to meet and discuss specific concerns with the scientists who prepare the documents. The meeting, chaired by an independent moderator, will be an important means of providing the Minister with public input.

The results of these sessions and revised study documents will comprise the final EIA. The EIA then will be

forwarded to Alberta Environment. The Minister of Environment has called for an independent EIA panel to make recommendations on the suitability of the project.

How To Contact Us

Are you wondering about the project? Do you want more information? Do you have questions, concerns, suggestions? Your views and recommendations are important and we want to hear from you. Please write or call EMA collect:

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