



MANITOBA ECO-NETWORK

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Attention: EICD Manager

Further to our phone conversation of Oct. 8, 2008, below is a brief overview of some issues the Manitoba Eco-Network water caucus has identified as important in any watershed planning process. Please feel free to get in touch with me for further information or contacts. One proposal I suggest strongly is that CD Boards reserve one seat for a professional or volunteer environmentalist. Our organization may be able to help you find individuals to fill that need.

Key issues in watershed planning:

1. Prioritize ecosystem and basic human needs over economic activity by establishing a sustainability boundary ensuring that water demand does not exceed capacity. Recognize ecosystems as legitimate water users with specific requirements for water quality, quantity and timing to maintain their health, integrity and productivity. Recognize the value of ecological services such as carbon sequestration, erosion control, purification of water and air, water retention and maintenance of biodiversity.
2. Prioritize ecosystem and human health over economic activity by implementing a multi-barrier approach, which counters threats to water all the way from watershed landscapes to the household tap, including source water protection, adequate treatment, well maintained distribution systems, strong water quality standards, regular inspection, testing, monitoring, operator training and certification, public notice, public reporting and involvement, contingency planning, research, adequate funding and rigorous enforcement.
3. Gather and provide access to reliable data on water use, including the volume of withdrawals (both licensed and actual amounts), the amount consumed, the timing and purpose of use and the quality of water returned to the environment. Link watershed planning and development planning processes.
4. Prioritize conservation over supply expansion by maximizing the productivity of existing infrastructure and water takings through integrating water efficient technologies, conservation-oriented water fees, and public education. For example, in the agricultural sector, funding currently directed at expanding infrastructure such as dams and pipelines should be shifted to finance studies and implementation of innovative demand management techniques such as water scheduling, efficient end-use technologies, public education, reducing losses in conveyance systems, water reuse and recycling and exploring into the limited and carefully planned use of off-stream storage. Prohibit the export of water resources.
5. Incorporate climate change mitigation and adaptation strategy including flexible water sharing approaches, building safety buffers into water supply calculations and flood, drought, and emergency response planning.

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