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Water Issues

- Alberta's water resources are managed through the *Water for Life* strategy, which has three key goals:
 - A safe, secure drinking water supply
 - Healthy aquatic ecosystems
 - Reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy
- The agriculture sector affects and is affected by Alberta's water resources and has a key role to play in ensuring that the *Water for Life* goals can be met.
- The Alberta Water Council (AWC) is a multi-stakeholder partnership with government, industry and non-government organizations as members. The AWC monitors and stewards the implementation of the Water for Life Strategy, providing advice and recommendations to the government, stakeholders and the public on improving water management practices.
- The AWC has created two working groups on the Water for Life Partnership Strategy, and Non-point Source Pollution. The CSWG has a representative on each of these working groups, which will develop terms of reference for longer term project teams.
- Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPAC's) are independent societies with no regulatory authority, which serve as advisory bodies to Alberta Environment and to their member organizations. There is one WPAC in each basin and they provide advisory documents like State of the Basin Reports, Integrated Watershed Management Plans and Water Management Plans. WPAC's generally consult with their communities to gather input for water management plans and work closely with Alberta Environment.
- Alberta Environment can choose to use the WPAC watershed management plans as the best available advice on the watershed if the WPAC's have done their work thoroughly and with lots of consultation with stakeholders. They can also do their own plans if needed.
- Watershed Stewardship Groups take on local community watershed activities.
- The agriculture sector has opportunities to be involved in water issues through the AWC – the CSWG will be seeking a seat on the Council; through the WPAC's by membership in the societies, and through local water stewardship groups.
- The Agri –Environmental Partnership of Alberta is planning a fall workshop on water issues including the Water For Life initiative, water allocation, water quality, on and off-stream storage, groundwater and other topics.

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- See www.waterforlife.alberta.ca for more information on the Water for Life initiative – there are further links to useful documents at this site.

Dirt Rocks!

- One of the CSWG main priorities (along with the Land Use Framework and water issues) is soil management.
- The Soil Conservation Council of Canada has a feature article on the renewed interest in soil conservation and the connections between environmental goals and good soil management.
- See www.soilcc.ca under feature article for the full story.

Ecosystem Services

- The Institute for Agriculture, Forestry and the Environment (IAFE) has submitted its final report and recommendations to the Government of Alberta.
- The IAFE report is focused on market based instruments (MBI) for ecosystem services, a concept that promotes market transactions to encourage environmental improvements rather than government regulations to force compliance.

Trends in Environmental Sustainability

- Proctor & Gamble is the latest company to require improved environmental performance from its suppliers with its Supplier Environmental Sustainability Scorecard. Walmart already has a Supplier Sustainability Assessment that eventually all its suppliers will be required to comply with to do business with Walmart.
- These two companies and a whole host of others, including major agricultural companies, are members of the Sustainability Consortium, an independent organization which involves researchers attempting to develop science-based methods for addressing sustainability throughout a product's life cycle. Environmental, social and economic impacts are considered. (See www.sustainabilityconsortium.org for more information.)
- The implications of the sustainability movement for agriculture are enormous. Regardless of the motives of the companies jumping on the environmental sustainability bandwagon – with market share and profits always at the top of the list – the agriculture sector, and farmers at the foundation of the sector, will increasingly need to prove their sustainability to stay in business.
- As price takers in the marketplace, this will be a challenge for farmers already operating at the margin because there will be costs involved. Markets for ecosystem services that farmers can provide on their land may be a new source of income for some but these are still in early stages of development. The whole sector will need to find creative ways for all market participants to be profitable because economic sustainability is at least as important as environmental sustainability.