

# Saskatchewan Agricultural Water Management Strategy

This strategy is the licencing of all unapproved (illegal) drainage works over the next 10 years without any consideration for the impacts to the environment including downstream flooding, drought mitigation, groundwater, fish and wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, water quality degradation including contributing of fertilizers, pesticides, sedimentation and overall accumulative effects on Canada's provincial, national and international watersheds without consultation with the public including Indigenous people. This will be carried out under "Networks" of drainage watersheds by ad hoc groups and/or formal Conservation and Development Authorities or Watershed Associations. These entities have legislated powers including the right to assign levies, collect taxes and expropriate land within their boundaries

## **Saskatchewan Facts on Agricultural Drainage**

- Drainage works are any human-made activity intended to remove or reduce water on land or just below the land surface. This includes deepening, straightening, widening and diversion of the course of a stream, creek or other watercourse; constructing or using dykes, drains, ditches, canals, pipes or tiles for carrying or conducting water; pumping to remove water; infilling or draining wetlands; and consolidating sloughs. Section 2(2) *Water Security Regulations 2015*
- Estimated 95% drainage by agriculture in the province is illegal – *Upper Assiniboine River Basin Study August 2000*
- Saskatchewan has over 2,900 km (1,800 miles) of organized drainage ditches, draining an estimated 4.5 million acres of farmland. – Provincial Auditor Report Chapter 12 *Water Security Agency – Regulating Drainage – June 2018*
- The Water Security Agency estimates approximately 1.6 million to 2.4 million acres of land have unapproved drainage works. – Provincial Auditor Report 2018
- In 2017, the Agency approved one permit encompassing 73 landowners and 18,000 acres of land for the Dry Lake Network Drainage Project. – Provincial Auditor Report 2018
- The Water Security Agency lacks many policies and protocols on drainage enforcement, licencing and risk assessment, wetland retention and water quality. - Provincial Auditor Report 2018

## A Case Study - Proposed Blackbird Creek Drainage Network – (Notes from Wroxton Landowner Only Meeting – December 14, 2018)

### Technical Information - Blackbird Creek flows

Frequency in Years	Based on Historic EDA	Based on Current EDA	Change in %
F-2	3.3 m <sup>3</sup> /sec	7.1 m <sup>3</sup> /sec	+200%
F-5	6.7 m <sup>3</sup> /sec	14.3 m <sup>3</sup> /sec	+200%
F-10	9.2 m <sup>3</sup> /sec	19.5 m <sup>3</sup> /sec	+200%

- 4-5 foot culverts pass 12 m<sup>3</sup>/sec
- Gross drainage area (GDA) – 77.9 km<sup>2</sup> (19,265 acres)
- Historic Effective Drainage Area (EDA) – 20.24 km<sup>2</sup> (5001.4 acres) - 26% of GDA
- New Effective Drainage Area (EDA) – 71.00 km<sup>2</sup> (17,544.5 acres) - 91% of GDA
- In order to control peak flood flows there will be gated controls with annual operation by C&D.

### Costs

- To change to the f-5 flood frequency proposal cost is estimated at \$710,000.
- To change to the f-10 flood frequency proposal cost estimate is \$960,000.

### Funding

- \$300K is being provided by Canadian Agricultural Partnership – *Farm Stewardship Program Drainage Stewardship BMP* funding for erosion and sedimentation control.
- Grant has to have matching funding of which the RM of Churchbridge is paying the other 50% (150K)
- \$50,000 from WSA for Qualified Person work and administration.
- Remaining will be taxed to ratepayers.

### Considerations

- WSA will be granting a 99 year licence.
- There is no mitigation for this project as it is not required.
- Expected that most easements are to be “free easements” [no cost] but where necessary **land will be expropriated.**
- **The next drainage network projects that will be South Cupar, North Cupar and Stoney Creek watersheds in the RM of Calder.**

### What can be done??

1. Demand a full impact assessment of both the Agricultural Water Management Strategy and all drainage networks, including Blackbird Creek, together with meaningful consultation with the public and Indigenous communities.
2. Sign the Federal *House of Commons Petition* to urge the Federal government to determine that a Federal Environmental Assessment be completed before licencing any additional networks. (<https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-1959>)
3. Support the **Citizens Environmental Alliance** in its efforts to bring this issue to the attention of the people of Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Canada.