

SASKATCHEWAN ALLIANCE FOR WATER SUSTAINABILITY

250 2550 – 15th Ave Regina SK, S4P 1A5

<http://lmlsg.ca/saws/>

President and Directors of the Board
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May 20, 2019

The Saskatchewan Alliance for Water Sustainability (SAWS) was organized in October 2017 after we (SAWS) learned of the Quill Lake Common Ground Drainage Project – a plan to drain highly saline water from the Quill Lakes basin to Last Mountain Lake.

SAWS has engaged with residents of the Qu'Appelle Valley communities, including non-profit organizations, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, Universities and Polytechnic, representing over 7,000 stakeholders, who have expressed deep concern about the effects that agricultural drainage has on the water quality and quantity in the Qu'Appelle River system.

Wetland drainage in the Quill Lake watershed contributes to 38% of the rise in the high-water levels of the Quill Lakes. High-water levels and flooding in the Quill Lake Watershed have compromised farmland and infrastructure in that area.

The presence of wetlands is essential because of all the benefits they provide – flood control, water quality improvement, ground water recharge and wildlife habitat.

Surface water under Saskatchewan law is a public resource. Wetland drainage is illegal without the required Drainage and Aquatic Habitat Protection Permits. The Water Security Agency (WSA) is the regulator for agricultural drainage in this province. However, wetlands continue to be drained without regulation by WSA and without accountability by those who drain.

While producers have not been applying for drainage approvals, they routinely request line locates when digging illegal drainage ditches. SAWS see this as an opportunity for landowners to be educated and reminded that they need an approval from WSA. WSA already has brochures that could be handed out or one could be easily developed for the line locate services provided. Informing landowners of their responsibilities would also limit liability and exposure to our Crown Corporations, SaskEnergy and Sask Power, by notifying potential violators of their responsibilities.

The Government of Saskatchewan has a duty to ensure that Watershed Associations (that derive legal authority from the Province) are acting in accordance with ethical, legal, and long- term stewardship goals around water management and water quality.

Saskatchewan residents have become alarmed at the lack of law enforcement, the lack of regulation and the short sightedness taken by our Minister of Environment in relation to wetland conservation. As a result, a growing number of volunteer groups are speaking out in support of a wetland conservation policy in this province.

The Provincial Auditor's Report, June 2018 Volume 1, Chapter 12, Water Security Agency – Regulation Drainage states,

“the Agency is in the early stages of implementing its new strategy. It has identified four strategic priorities as critical to its success: strong public education campaign, success in implementing the new strategy in the watershed basins it assessed as highest risk to demonstrate the strategy works, completing and implementing policies that support the strategy, and strategic enforcement.”

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In the Auditors Report, Judy Ferguson concludes:

“At December 2017, the Agency was in the early stages of implementing its new strategy for regulating the drainage of agricultural land. This strategy reflects a significant change in the regulation of drainage of water in Saskatchewan; it requires a shift from viewing drainage as a landowner’s right to considering the broader implications of drainage and water flows. Changes of this magnitude take time to implement.”

The Crown Investment Corporation oversees subsidiary Crown corporation strategic direction and manages a framework designed to strengthen governance, performance and accountability of Crown corporations, and to assist Crown corporation boards in discharging their responsibilities.

Enclosed is a WSA educational brochure that provides details on how and when to apply for drainage approval. We ask for your assistance in ensuring that our Crown Corporations use this brochure as a handout to landowners prior to gas/power line locates.

Wetland drainage without a permit is illegal. When a Crown corporation agrees to locate gas/power lines, without the presence of regulatory approval, they would be assisting in an illegal drainage activity.

Will CIC do their part by ensuring Sask Power and SaskEnergy strengthen their policy of governance by making certain the process of line locating is in compliance with the law?

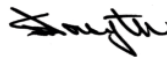
We all have a responsibility to protect our environment.

We are requesting a board response at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Aura Lee MacPherson, Chair



Sherry Forsyth, Vice-Chair

cc: Sask Power Incorporated
SaskEnergy Incorporated
Susan Ross, WSA President and Executive Officer
Alice Davis, Water Manager for Lower Qu'appelle Watershed Stewards
Melissa Bramham, Water Manager for WUQWATR
Mark Glabus, Chair of the Calling Lakes District Planning Committee
Honourable Dustin Duncan, Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Water Security Agency
Honourable Ralph Goodale, Member of Parliament for Regina – Wascana (Saskatchewan)