



## **Water Working Group (WWG)**

### **Terms of Reference – Final**

December 5th, 2012

#### **Purpose:**

In support of CEMA's over-arching goals, the role of the Water Working Group is to develop recommendations for regional water quality and quantity management in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) and to align water management frameworks, best practices and implementation strategies with Government priorities. Traditional Environmental Knowledge will be incorporated in WWG products.

#### **Objectives:**

- Support, implement or recommend approaches to improve characterization and knowledge of regional surface water and groundwater resources and closely connected groundwater-surface water systems.
- Provide a greater understanding of the vital interactions/connection between groundwater and surface water in the region.
- Review, assess and recommend solutions to knowledge gaps in water management.
- Review, assess, and recommend improvements to regional water quality and quantity monitoring programs or integrated watershed monitoring initiatives, with a focus on potential cumulative impacts associated with development.
- When required, develop technical guidance documents for adoption by governments that provide best practices supportive of regional water management goals, and the proper management and protection of groundwater and surface water resources.
- Assist regulatory agencies, upon request and as appropriate in the implementation, review or updating of existing or proposed regional water management frameworks.
- Report annually to the CEMA board on the status and trends of the water quality and water quantity within the surface mining areas, in-situ areas and in association with the tailings ponds and end pit lakes.
- Report annually to the CEMA board on the environmental risks of the water quality and water quantity within the surface mining, in-situ areas and in association with the tailings ponds and end pit lakes.
- Provide an annual update to the CEMA board on water initiatives and activities undertaken in the Athabasca Oil Sands Region.

#### **Context:**

Potential impacts to water resources in the Athabasca Oil Sands region are a concern for stakeholders and regulatory agencies. The Water Working Group (WWG) is being established by CEMA to address possible approaches to the management of cumulative effects of industrial development on the functioning of water systems in the RMWB. The WWG will address water-related issues and develop strategies or management plans; these plans and recommendations will require endorsement of the CEMA Board. In conducting its work the WWG will need to formally interface with other CEMA working groups (see **Operating Guidelines**, below), other regional multi-stakeholder organizations, and regulators. Water-related recommendations of the WWG will be undertaken within the context of federal and provincial legislation and associated guidelines, policies, and directives. The recommendations may result in changes to the approach to regional water management, by giving due consideration to the unique challenges posed by the scale and extent of water systems and industrial developments and the timeframes over which cumulative impacts may occur.

#### **Operating Guidelines:**

The WWG will operate in a manner that is consistent with the [principles](#), rules, [policies](#), and [procedures](#) adopted by CEMA and will follow the CEMA [decision making policy](#) and [guideline](#).



The WWG will:

- oversee, coordinate, and integrate the work of any required technical subgroups;
- promote a proactive and progressive integration of water management across all industrial developments within the region;
- make recommendations to CEMA on regional water management,;
- identify studies required to address knowledge gaps, which may result in the formation of subgroups or recommendations for future studies related to water management; and
- conduct other activities agreed to by the group and CEMA members.
- report to CEMA board annually on the status and trends of the water quality and water quantity of water within the surface mining areas, in-situ areas and in association with the tailings ponds and end pit lakes.
- report to CEMA board annually on the environmental risks of the water quality and water quantity of water within the surface mining, in-situ areas and in association with the tailings ponds and end pit lakes.

The WWG may commission studies to develop a better understanding of regional and oil sand-specific water issues where and when required for the effective reporting and development of recommendations. The WWG will also consider the need to formally interface with other CEMA working groups and other organizations. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Canada's Oil Sands Innovation Alliance (COSIA);
- Alberta Geological Survey;
- Alberta Innovates;
- The Joint Oil Sands Monitoring Program;
- The Athabasca Watershed Council (WPAC);
- other pertinent groups that may be formed in the future.

The WWG may also require access to the groundwater database maintained by Golder Associates on behalf of the Oil Sands mining companies.

Chairpersons will be nominated by the membership and selected according to appropriate CEMA guidelines. The term for a chairperson is 2 years. The WWG will strive to have 2 or 3 chairpersons at a time, with overlapping terms to ensure effective transition. The WWG will also strive to have at least one chairperson from Industry and at least one chairperson from Government, Aboriginal and NGO at any given time.

#### **WWG Membership:**

- Any member of CEMA is eligible to join the WWG.
- The WWG will seek to maintain broad stakeholder representation.
- Details of membership responsibilities and chair rotation can be found in CEMA's [membership](#) and [chairing](#) policies and procedures.
- A WWG member is expected to:
  - be able to attend and participate on a regular, consistent basis;
  - be fully informed and up to date about the subjects to be discussed at meetings;
  - contribute to meetings; and
  - accept and abide by CEMA's decision making policy and guideline.

#### **Reporting to the CEMA Board:**

The WWG will prepare various reports for CEMA Board information and/or approval. These may include activity reports, progress reports, annual reports, technical or guidance documents, and scientific reports. Externally-prepared documents will first be reviewed / approved by the WWG and then recommended for CEMA acceptance and publication.



This ToR will be reviewed and updated every 2 years. This will allow for a review and confirmation of the WWG purpose and objectives by CEMA Members.