

The Master Agreement on Apportionment at 50

A half-century of partnership to share and protect interprovincial waters



Prairie Provinces Water Board

In the Canadian Prairie region, runoff from the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains flows east to feed major rivers in the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba before emptying into Hudson Bay. But rivers, lakes and aquifers do not conform to provincial boundaries. For 50 years, the Master Agreement on Apportionment (MAA) has allowed the three Prairie Provinces to collaboratively set goals for the management of important transboundary waters, and to equitably share water resources.

Stability over decades of change

Few interjurisdictional agreements have been in place as long as the MAA. Governments change. Population centres grow. The needs of industry shift. For a half-century, the MAA has allowed the Prairie Provinces to successfully manage the evolving needs and expectations of government, business and the public when it comes to shared waterways. The MAA's longevity is an ongoing validation of the Agreement itself, as well as the work of the Prairie Provinces Water Board (PPWB) that administers the MAA and facilitates cooperation, collaboration and goodwill among the Provinces and the Federal government.

Autonomy through collaboration

Much of the MAA's enduring success is attributable to a structure that encourages collaboration amongst governments on common goals, and respects each Province's autonomy to independently manage water resources as established in the Natural Resources Transfer Acts of 1930. Under the MAA, a clear formula sets out how much transboundary water each Province must deliver to the downstream jurisdiction, as well as each Province's responsibility with respect to water quality objectives. The MAA facilitates both flexibility and certainty for Provinces to plan for the long term knowing how much water, and the quality of water, they must deliver and can expect to receive.

Sound structure

The MAA came into force in 1969, although the intergovernmental Prairie Provinces Water Board that administers the Agreement was established two decades earlier. From the PPWB's creation in 1948 until the mid-1960s, the Prairie Provinces struggled to resolve specific challenges related to new or proposed projects that would require large allocations of water. The signing of the MAA provided the structure the Provinces needed to equitably apportion water on an ongoing, long-term basis. The MAA established the PPWB's responsibility to administer the Agreement, report on obligations and outcomes, conduct relevant water studies, advise governments on water stewardship and provide a forum for dialogue on cooperative management of shared waters. The PPWB is supported by a professional secretariat that carries out day-to-day management of the Board's mandate, as well as technical committees that advise on matters of hydrology, water quality, groundwater and flow forecasting. The structure has proven remarkably effective: the dispute resolution mechanism established under the MAA has not once been used in the Agreement's 50 years.

A model of interjurisdictional cooperation

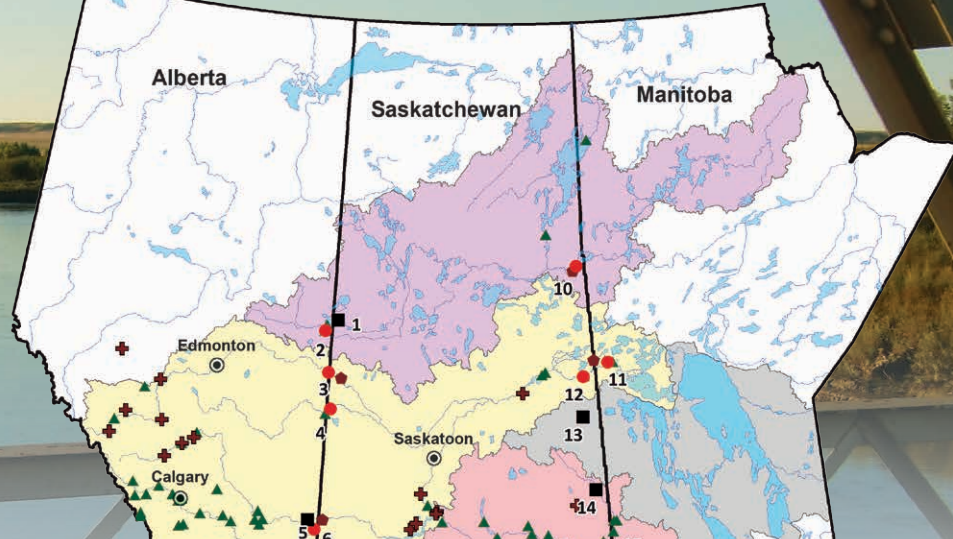
In Canada and abroad, the MAA has been celebrated as an effective blueprint for long-term collaboration and partnership among jurisdictions. A federal inquiry on water policy noted, "The most significant interjurisdictional water arrangement in Canada is the (Master) Agreement on Apportionment." Internationally, the MAA has been presented as a model to inform multilateral discussions on water resources as part of the Middle East peace process.

An evolving mandate

Since the inception of the MAA, members of the PPWB and their governments have recognized the importance of continually reviewing the Agreement to anticipate and address emerging needs and challenges. In 1992, the MAA was amended to further protect water quality, adding water quality objectives for 11 interprovincial river reaches as well as commitments to address human-caused impacts. The 1992 amendment also gave the PPWB authority to address transboundary groundwater issues. In 2015 the interprovincial water quality objectives were updated and a 12th river reach was added.

A framework for the future

A changing climate, evolving water demands, and other drivers will pose new challenges. To plan for the future, the PPWB has established a charter, a strategy, and a rolling five-year work plan. Core activities in the work plan ensure the mandate of the MAA is fulfilled. Improvement and modernization activities help ensure the soundness of the Agreement going forward. For example, the water quality objectives are reviewed on an ongoing basis and updated every five years; and a specific groundwater agreement is currently under development to improve the sustainability of shared aquifers. The long-term resilience of the MAA is being examined, with work focused on an 'equitable apportionment' approach under changing climate, hydrology, ecology and water demand regimes. 2019 marks fifty years of collaborative water management in the Canadian Prairie region. The Board is committed to and invested in ensuring its representative governments are well-served by the Agreement for years to come.



PPWB Monitoring Locations

PPWB Apportionment and Water Quality Sites

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Cold River | 8 Middle Creek |
| 2 Beaver River | 9 Lodge Creek |
| 3 North Saskatchewan River | 10 Churchill River |
| 4 Battle River | 11 Saskatchewan River |
| 5 Red Deer River A/S | 12 Carrot River |
| 6 South Saskatchewan River | 13 Red Deer River S/M |
| 7 Battle Creek | 14 Assiniboine River |
| | 15 Qu'Appelle River |
| | 16 Pipestone Creek |

Type of Monitoring

- | |
|-----------------------------|
| ▲ Hydrometric |
| ● Meteorological |
| ● Quality |
| ● Apportionment |
| ■ Apportionment and Quality |

Basins

- | |
|----------------------|
| ■ Assiniboine River |
| ■ Churchill River |
| ■ Lake Winnipeg |
| ■ Missouri River |
| ■ Saskatchewan River |