

Alberta's Evolving Non-Saline and Saline Water Use Regulatory Requirements for Oil Sands Projects

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The Alberta regulatory framework continues to evolve with respect to water use for oil sands projects. Under a draft Energy Resources and Conservation Board (ERCB) directive, in situ oil sand operators would be required to limit their non-saline use to 10% of the annual water use requirements, and to 25% for saline water use. New Alberta Environment (AENV) regulations are also proposed with respect to non-saline water in direct contact with bitumen. Discussion has been held at AENV regarding updating the non-saline limit from 4,000 mg/L TDS, to 10,000 mg/L TDS. Additionally, AENV's groundwater management frameworks will soon be in-place for the Athabasca, South Athabasca and Cold Lake regions. The new regulations and water management frameworks will impact existing and proposed oil sands projects.

In this presentation, detail will be provided on:

- An overview of the current and proposed water regulatory framework
- The drivers for new regulations and directives
- Practical applications of how these evolving regulations will take shape
- Expected timelines for new regulations and water use limits
- Limitations and enforcement measures, and how they will be applied in practise
- How these new limits will affect existing and new operations
- Establishing effective monitoring and reporting requirements in Alberta's oil sands regions and river basins

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Mr. Wills is president of Waterline Resources Inc, a Calgary Alberta and Vancouver Island-based hydrogeological consulting firm. He has a M.Sc. in hydrogeology (UofW), and 23 years of related experience focusing mainly on groundwater exploration, development and management. He has extensive national and international experience, and since 2000 he has focused on preparing EIAs for oil sands projects. In addition to providing senior technical oversight, Mr. Wills is increasingly being retained to assist clients in interpreting and navigating the evolving water use approval process in western Canada. He is a former regulator, and a past-President of the Canadian Chapter of the International Association of Hydrogeologists.