

## **New Brunswick and water management**

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Water is not only necessary for life, but it's also an important component for a strong and vibrant economy. The United Nations has identified water as the "issue of the new Millennium". In Canada, water management is a shared

responsibility between the federal, provincial and municipal governments. Currently, the federal government's roles and responsibilities pertaining to the management of water are exercised primarily through the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act*, and the *Canada Water Act* amongst other related legislation. Several policies and strategies serve to assist in clarifying these responsibilities. In 1987, the federal government produced a *Federal Water Policy* in which commitments were made on several key water management issues. Unfortunately, many of these commitments have not yet materialized.

In New Brunswick, drinking water supplies can be categorized as follows; 40% of the population rely on municipal surface water, 20% on municipal groundwater and 40% of the population utilize domestic groundwater wells. Originally, provincial water responsibilities were handled by way of the *Water Resources and Pollution Control Act*. New Brunswick water related legislation continued to evolve with the advent of the *Water Act*: circa 1961 to 1975. This Act also included provisions for the *New Brunswick Water Authority*. Then in December 1971, the *Clean Environment Act* was passed in an effort to better regulate areas of water quality concerns. Although periodically amended, this Act is still in existence today.

Through the introduction of the *Petroleum Storage and*

*Handling Regulation* in 1987 (under the *Clean Environment Act*), and the proclamation of the *Clean Water Act* in 1989, New Brunswick embarked on a new era of water management. Legislation now addressed sub-surface contamination as well as providing for potable water and water resource protection. Clean drinking water and public education were at the heart of this regulatory effort. The developments of three proactive water management programs were soon to follow as New Brunswick began to strategically piece together a sustainable approach. The areas of wellfield protection, watershed protection and water classification spearheaded program work within the department. In 1994, the *Potable Water Regulation* came into effect in an effort to monitor both municipal and domestic potable water qualities. The preservation of clean and plentiful drinking water, for present and future New Brunswickers, remains a critical objective of the New Brunswick Department of the Environment.

A recent Governments Roundtable on Water focussed on three key issues: Preventative Planning, Water Quality and Aquatic Ecosystems, Demand/Use and Management. New Brunswick is moving to address similar types of issues as well as Water Allocation and Bulk Water Export using various levels of participation, and would benefit through extended participation from the federal government by way of a renewed national management effort.