

NEWS RELEASE**Cross-boundary Watershed Management Necessary for both sides**

ARBI: Recent MOU signing between Manitoba and Saskatchewan highlights potential need for action

Winnipeg MB (Nov 25, 2021) – Leaders of the Assiniboine River Basin Initiative (ARBI) were pleased to hear a new five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) had been signed between Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

However, ARBI also hopes the MOU will springboard more action and collaboration between the two Prairie provinces that share a number of transboundary watersheds including the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Rivers' watersheds.

"The 2021 drought showcased the importance of wise water and land management first hand to many producers and land managers," says Dr. Allan Preston, ARBI chair. "From that perspective, ARBI was encouraged by the governments of Manitoba and Saskatchewan recently renewed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) respecting water management between the two provinces. The time to move the plan from planning to action could not be better or more urgent."

Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development Minister Ralph Eichler and Saskatchewan Minister Responsible for Water Security Agency Fred Bradshaw made the announcement.

"We recognize the tremendous progress made in the last five years with Saskatchewan to improve water management across our shared watersheds," said Eichler in a government media release announcing the MOU. "Renewing our partnership will help both jurisdictions continue to focus on today's issues like flooding, drought and drainage, while providing a strong framework to meet new challenges."

Activities and developments in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, such as drainage across these watersheds, have the potential to impact downstream water quantity and quality. Both governments entered into an MOU in 2015 that set out broad principles to facilitate a co-operative and co-ordinated approach in their efforts to mitigate flooding, drought, to protect and improve water quality and aquatic ecosystem health, to achieve a healthy, prosperous and sustainable-shared watersheds for present and future generations.

ARBI points to the engagement and collaboration with key stakeholders as keys to success at the landscape table as well as more utilization of technology already in hand or in stages of development.

"Over the course of the last 10 years, the Assiniboine River Basin has gone through historical floods and most recently drought, all of which emphasize the need for collaborative water management," says Wanda McFadyen, ARBI executive director. "One thing we hear repeatedly from stakeholders around the board table and across the basin is that working together and sharing of information is critical in building resiliency and sustainability for all."

McFadyen says technology tools such as the Manitoba Forage and Grassland Association's Aquanty Model (MFGA.net) as examples of water movement technology – one phase is completed and available for scenarios, a second phase is underway to provide a water resources forecasting tool for producers and land managers to be completed early 2023 -that could be more widely engaged and activated in the cross province dialogues.

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