

June 22, 2021

## Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) approves Springbank Off-Stream Reservoir Project

### The project

- The Springbank Off-Stream Reservoir is intended to work in tandem with the Glenmore Reservoir to limit flood flows through Calgary.
  - The project has the capacity to divert flows of up to 600 cubic metres per second ( $m^3/s$ ) from the Elbow River to the off-stream reservoir during flood events (when flow in the river is greater than  $160 m^3/s$ ).
  - During a design flood (2013) approximately half of the flow in the Elbow River can be diverted into the reservoir. The remaining flow would pass through the diversion structure in the Elbow River to the Glenmore Reservoir and from there released at a rate of  $160 m^3/s$ .
  - Together, the two reservoirs will have a total combined storage capacity of  $87,771,000 m^3$ , exceeding the amount of water that overtopped the Glenmore Dam during the 2013 flood, resulting in overland flooding downstream of the Glenmore Reservoir.
- The key components of the Project include the diversion structure, a 4.7 km long diversion channel, a dry reservoir with a capacity of approximately  $78,000,000 m^3$  and a maximum flooded area of approximately 800 hectares, a dam that stretches 3.3 km in length with a maximum height of 29 m, low-level outlet works, and access roads.
- The construction costs have been estimated at approximately \$340 million and land acquisition costs are expected to be about \$140 million.
- The Project description is set out in more detail in the environmental impact assessment submitted by Alberta Transportation and in the NRCB decision (Board Decision 2021-01). Both documents are available on the NRCB website ([www.nrcb.ca](http://www.nrcb.ca)).

### Key findings

- The Project will reduce flood risk to human life, as well as financial losses from damages to residential, commercial, and public buildings and infrastructure, and will reduce both direct and indirect economic losses from the disruption of business.
- Alberta Transportation must fulfil specific commitments to advancing consultation with the Stoney Nakoda Nations, including addressing the recommendations made by the Stoney Nakoda in their interim traditional land use assessment.
- Consultation and accommodation with the other Indigenous groups has been sufficient. Twelve of thirteen Indigenous groups have provided letters of non-objection; continue to consult and seek accommodation with Alberta Transportation outside of the NRCB review process; or decided after consultation with Alberta Transportation that the Project does not significantly impact their rights.

- The Project is expected to have generally low to negligible environmental effects. Where environmental effects do have impact, or where the impacts are uncertain, such as in air quality, aquatic ecology, wildlife, and surface and groundwater, Alberta Transportation's monitoring and mitigation plans should address the uncertainties.

## NRCB conditions of approval

The approval requires the Project operator (Alberta Transportation or Alberta Environment and Parks) to implement the commitments made in the Project proposal, as well as implement conditions imposed by the Board that are mandatory to the NRCB approval. For example, the Operator will be required to:

- establish a Joint Land Use Advisory Committee consisting of members of Indigenous groups and the local community to make recommendations about potential land uses and naming of the Project, that may be included in a draft future Land Use Plan;
- make Project monitoring results related to aquatic ecology, hydrology and sediment transport, surface water quality, groundwater quality and quantity, vegetation, terrain and soils, wildlife and biodiversity, and air quality publicly accessible;
- monitor water levels in domestic water wells west of the diversion channel to the boundary of the local assessment area that may be impacted by dewatering during the Project construction. During flood and dryland operation, monitoring of the wells should be continued by the Operator for a minimum of five years or until it can be demonstrated that permanent lowering of the water level does not significantly impact yields from the water wells. The Operator is required to take mitigative action if significant yield reductions attributable to the Project are observed at the water wells.
- provide Indigenous groups access to the project development area prior to construction to harvest traditional use plants and conduct ceremonies, and to conduct pre and post-construction site visits to observed proposed mitigation measures and provide feedback to the Operator; and
- to the satisfaction of Alberta Environment and Parks, conduct air quality monitoring for a minimum 16 months post-flood at the Calaway Park (when it is open to the public) and Springbank community monitoring stations that are capable of sending automatic alerts when air concentrations exceed designated alert levels.

## Other required approvals

- Before the approval comes into effect, the NRCB approval requires an authorization by the Lieutenant Governor via an Order in Council.
- The application must also be approved by the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada which is conducting an independent environmental assessment of the Project under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012*.
- Alberta Transportation also requires provincial approvals (e.g., *Water Act*) from Alberta Environment and Parks, including a review and approval from Alberta Dam Safety. It also requires a federal approval (i.e., *Fisheries Act*) from Fisheries and Oceans Canada for the Project.
- The Government of Alberta makes its own determination on the adequacy of Crown consultation with Indigenous Peoples.

## NRCB timeline to approval

- The Project application was filed with the NRCB on November 2, 2017 (Alberta Transportation refiled an updated application in March 26, 2018).
- On December 21, 2020, the NRCB issued notice it would hold a public hearing beginning on March 22, 2021.
- The NRCB's performance measure for release of a decision under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act* is within 80 business days of the close of the hearing. This decision was released 53 business days after the close of the public hearing on April 7, 2021—well within that benchmark.

## NRCB mandate

- The Board of the NRCB is responsible under the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act* (NRCBA) for determining whether major natural resource projects are in the public interest. Reviewable projects under the NRCBA include forest industry, recreational or tourism, metallic or industrial mineral, water management, and any other type of project prescribed in the regulations or by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.
- The Board determines the public interest of reviewable projects by considering their potential social, economic, and environmental effects. The Board submits its form of approval to the Lieutenant Governor in Council for authorization by Order in Council.

## Media inquiries:

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