

## Information Sheet #4 – Highlights of the Draft 2025 Elk Valley Water Quality Plan

On July 9, 2024, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (now called Minister of Environment and Parks) issued [Ministerial Order M232-2024](#) (the Order) requiring the ministry to prepare amendments to the area based management plan (ABMP) for the Elk Valley, titled the 2014 Elk Valley Water Quality Plan (2014 EVWQP). This is the first time the ABMP is being amended since it was approved in 2014.

Schedule B of the Order sets the requirements for this amendment and provides:

- A Terms of Reference for the amendment,
- The purpose of the ABMP,
- Issues to be addressed in the amendment,
- Responsibilities,
- Process for consultation, and
- A timeline for development of the amendment.

This information sheet highlights changes incorporated into the draft amended ABMP (draft 2025 EVWQP) in alignment with the Order.

### Key Changes from the 2014 EVWQP

As required by the Order, the ministry has prepared a draft 2025 EVWQP to replace the 2014 version of the plan prepared by industry. The draft 2025 EVWQP provides greater clarity and increases transparency into how water quality is managed in the Elk Valley.

Key changes in the draft 2025 EVWQP include:

- structuring the ABMP as a ministry policy document to inform decision-making, rather than it be a plan prepared by industry,
- creating a new vision statement for water quality in the Elk Valley,
- clarifying the ABMP goals,
- updating the calcite target to reflect new science,

- providing an implementation strategy to make progress towards the goals and vision,
- clarifying how the ABMP applies to all dischargers in the Elk Valley,
- describing the broader regulatory framework for water quality decision-making in the Elk Valley, including how the ABMP works alongside authorizations,
- providing transparency into how the goals of the ABMP guide statutory decision making by the ministry to improve water quality, and,
- describing a process to update the ABMP to stay relevant as mining continues in the Elk Valley.

### Audience

Ministry staff designated as statutory decision makers (SDMs) under the Environmental Management Act (EMA) are the primary audience for the updated plan. SDMs are ministry staff who are trained to make independent decisions related to waste discharges.

The ABMP provides guidance for ministry SDMs to consider along with other relevant factors when making authorization decisions (see Information Sheet #2). Implementation of the guidance is expected to result in progress over time towards achieving the ABMP goals.

The ABMP is also relevant for other audiences, including industry and governments. The draft 2025 EVWQP increases transparency and contextualizes background information as well as the goals, strategy and tools for area based management in the Elk Valley so that it is easier to understand. External parties such as mining companies may wish to consider this information in their project planning and decision making.

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## Plan Organization and Structure

The draft 2025 EVWQP first describes existing background information and context (Sections 1 and 2). It increases transparency into how water quality is managed in the Elk Valley.

Then, the document provides a vision statement and purpose for the plan (Section 3). The vision statement is new to the plan (see Figure 1), while the purpose was provided in the Order.

The vision for the ABMP designated area is for water quality that:

- is safe for ʔa-kxaʔhis ǰapi qapsin (All Living Things),
- supports healthy communities and ecosystems,
- protects Ktunaxa rights, and
- protects the uses and values of all who live in the watershed and have relationships with the water.

**Figure 1: Vision Statement – new in draft 2025 EVWQP**

Next, the draft 2025 EVWQP provides goals (Section 4), which are supported by an implementation strategy (Section 5) and area based management tools (Section 6), as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: Goals, implementation strategy and tools**

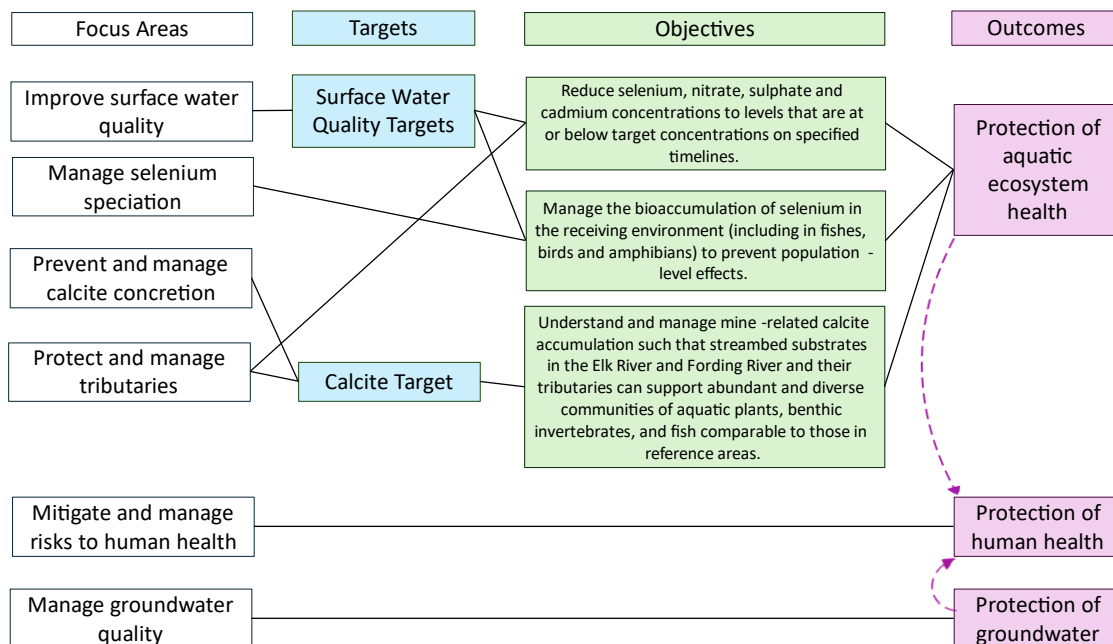
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The goals include clarification of outcomes and objectives in the ABMP (see Figure 2). The surface water quality targets from the 2014 EVWQP are carried forward. A change in the draft 2025 EVWQP is an update to the calcite target to reflect new science (Section 4.3.2).

The goals are supported by an implementation strategy designed around six focus areas (see Figure 3). Guidance for SDMs is provided for each focus area.

The goals are also supported by area based management tools (Section 6). The tools include regional modelling and assessment tools, regional programs, and regional committees.

Finally, the draft 2025 EVWQP describes how it will be kept relevant and effective (Section 7). The ABMP is intended to adapt and respond to new information.



Goals: include outcomes, objectives and targets

Outcome: desired long-term future state

Objective: represents progress towards outcome

Target: measurable and achievable indicator related to the objective(s)

Focus Area: include areas where current and ongoing actions will help make progress towards the goals

**Figure 3: Focus areas with primary linkages to goals**