

Promoting Understanding of Water Withdrawals

Assembling a *Youth Water Council* for the Special Areas

This project intends to explore a new approach to communicating and promoting the rules and requirements for withdrawing water from Alberta rivers and lakes. In this project, a **Youth Water Council**, made up of senior 4-H members from the east-central (Special Areas) region of Alberta, will explore the project's core challenge and take action to respond to it.

The Core Challenge

Water is a limited resource that supports all of us and the environment we live in and enjoy. Our population and our economy put demands on our water resources, and water is required to sustain the natural environment. We put rules in place as a way to balance the demand for water with the needs of people and the environment. Some feel this is too restrictive or too time-consuming, while others feel the rules may not sufficiently protect the environment.

Our challenge:

We need to find a way to help everyone understand the rules for taking and using water and why those rules are in place. How can we communicate this well?

The Project

The **Youth Water Council** will explore the different perspectives on water withdrawals in Alberta, focusing mostly on short-term or 'temporary' withdrawals (or diversions). The Council will hear from experts and gain perspectives from the community to understand what different views exist. Then, using their knowledge, the Council will:

1. create their own plain-language version of the water withdrawal rules,
2. describe why they understand them to be important,
3. create their own products to carry their message to a broader audience.

Origins of the Project

As a result of a *Water Act* infraction, the Provincial Court of Alberta directed that a creative sentencing project be undertaken to help educate people on requirements companies must follow when using water for energy development. The Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) conducted a competitive process to select an innovative project to meet the needs of the Court Order (available on the AER's Compliance Dashboard reference no. 202010-27) and the Youth Water Council project approach was successful.



Becoming a 4-H Pilot Project

A partnership with 4-H Alberta developed because of the close alignment between the goals of 4-H and those of the project. The 4-H motto ***Learn to Do by Doing*** runs through the heart of the **Youth Water Council** project, with different parts of the project supporting each of the four [4-H leadership development pillars](#).



Community Engagement and Communications

Exploring water issues and having a significant voice in promoting an understanding of water withdrawals in the broader community.



Science and Technology

Interacting with community and environmental experts to explore how science and environmental regulations connect.



Environment & Healthy Living

Digging into issues and challenges of how the environment is managed.



Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security

Connecting an understanding of water withdrawals with potential landscape impacts affecting agriculture and other users.

Some Important Details



The **Youth Water Council** will include up to 20 senior 4-H members (age 15-19) who live in or near Alberta's Special Areas region (the east-central 4-H region).



Council will meet with and learn from experts such as local residents, water regulation, environmental science, and communications, and could include informal surveys and discussions amongst friends and family.



To focus their projects, Council will design target audience 'avatars' and decide how to focus their communications by getting input from their fellow club and community members



A key product of the **Youth Water Council** is a Council-version of the rules for water withdrawal. These will be foundational to the Council's projects to communicate to Albertans what the Council has learned and feels is important.



The experiences of our **Youth Water Council** members through the project is an important story to tell. The project is planning a couple of short video productions to tell the story of where members started the journey and how their understanding changed throughout the process.

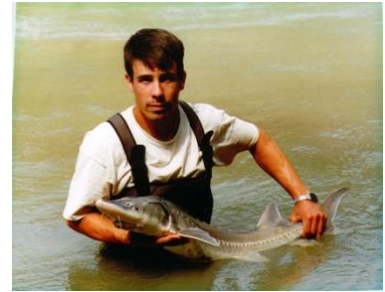


The **Youth Water Council** will work through a mixture of virtual sessions and a weekend in-person gathering during the fall to learn and then develop their collaborative projects.



Scott Millar and Collaboration Dynamics

The Youth Water Council project approach was put forward by Scott Millar and his company Collaboration Dynamics. Trained as a fisheries biologist, Scott has run fisheries studies across western and northern Canada. In 2005, Scott began work with the provincial government as the Provincial Aquatic Habitat Biologist. His focus shifted over time to regulatory design, and he was one of the core team that created the legislation for the Alberta Energy Regulator.



After it was established, Scott took on a role at the Alberta Energy Regulator conducting major projects that focused on facilitating large scale complex issues such as Indigenous Consultation and new ways to create regulations.

Scott kicked off Collaboration Dynamics in mid-2020 with a focus on collaborative and citizen-driven projects and has just completed two projects for the Alberta Water Council.

For more information, contact Scott at scott.millar@8miles.ca