



IDWQ Data Tool webpage

**NEWS RELEASE
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Alberta Irrigation Water Quality Information Now Available Online.

Alberta has excellent irrigation water quality.

Lethbridge, AB..... The Alberta Irrigation Districts Association (AIDA) today announced the release of the Irrigation District Water Quality data tool which provides online access to water quality information collected within Alberta irrigation infrastructure. Nearly 8,000 kilometres of

canals and pipelines, 57 storage reservoirs and 4,800 kilometres of drainage infrastructure make up Alberta's irrigation infrastructure. This infrastructure not only supplies water to more than 1.4 million acres of irrigated farmland but also supports rural municipalities, domestic water users, wildlife habitat, wetlands and recreational activities.

Since 2006, the on-going Irrigation District Water Quality (IDWQ) project has assessed general water quality and evaluated changes in the quality of water as it travels through irrigation infrastructure. The quality of irrigation water at over 100 sites has been assessed against guidelines for irrigation using a water quality index and analyzed for trends over time. The project is currently funded by the AIDA. Data from the study indicates that the quality of Alberta's irrigation water is generally excellent.

In the past, water quality information evaluated for the project has been available to irrigation districts, agricultural producers, commodity organizations, agri-food processors, government agencies and others by request. Users can now access sampling site locations, site photos, download water quality information and view annual water quality index scores for each site by visiting the Irrigation District Water Quality data tool online at www.idwq.ca.

Agricultural producers, in particular, are increasingly requested by food processors and the public to demonstrate the quality of irrigation water used for food production. "Monitoring and reporting irrigation water quality shows our due diligence in food safety that extends to everything that goes into our plant. It is very helpful to be able to access the tool for documentation and come audit time I will be

bringing the site up to show our CanadaGAP® auditor for verification.” Norm Wynne, Farm Food Safety/CanadaGAP® Manager, Gouw Quality Onions, Taber.

Over the years, irrigation districts have monitored the information from the study to identify water quality concerns within their infrastructure. The data tool will allow them to continue diligently monitoring areas within their infrastructure for water quality concerns. This knowledge will allow for future development and implementation of mitigation or best management practices (BMPs), in collaboration with other stakeholders, to maintain water quality. Chris Gallagher, Manager of the Taber Irrigation District explains, “One of TID’s strategic goals is to deliver the best possible water quality to our water users. As a vital part of our Integrated Watershed Management approach, the IDWQ project helped us identify contaminant sources to design and prioritize solutions such as constructed wetlands, bioreactors and reservoir riparian enhancements. Many of these are collaborative projects with local municipalities and include technical and financial support from provincial government agencies and programs, such as the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program and the Alberta Community Resilience Program. The IDWQ tool will continue to provide access to information for TID and our partners to evaluate the effectiveness of these BMPs and identify further opportunities to maintain and improve water quality. With this publicly available, our water users will also be able to connect their land stewardship decisions to the quality of water we all receive.”

The Irrigation District Water Quality project continues to assure Albertans of the excellent quality irrigation water that is used to grow food, provide recreation and domestic rural water supply in southern Alberta. The new online IDWQ data tool will provide convenient access for individuals and organizations with an interest in irrigation water quality.

Visit www.idwq.ca to access the online Irrigation District Water Quality data tool. For more information on irrigation water quality google “Alberta Irrigation Water Quality”.

The Alberta Irrigation Districts Association represents Alberta’s 13 irrigation districts. The Association supports irrigation sector research and technology development, provides advocacy, education and outreach services and assists in providing irrigation sector professional development to ensure irrigation in Alberta is vibrant, sustainable and valued.

For more information, please contact:

Margo Jarvis Redelback, P.Ag.

Executive Director

403-308-7301 or margo.redelback@aipa.org

www.aipa.ca

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