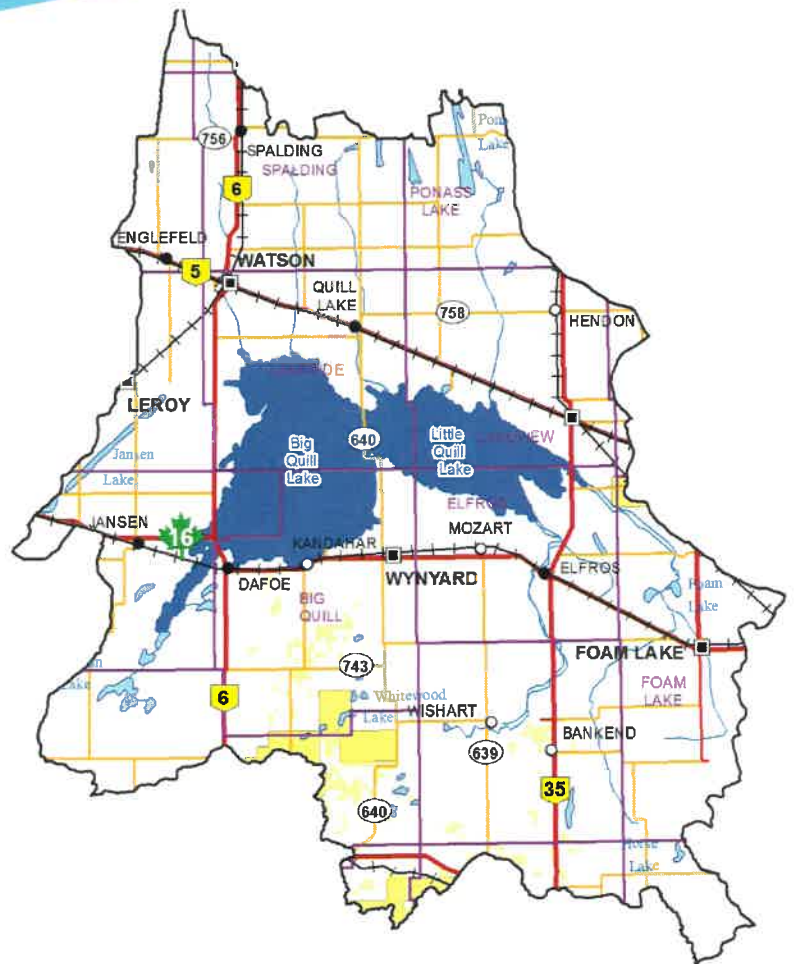


# Responsible Drainage in the Quill Lakes

## Looking at Options: Quill Lakes Basin

The situation in the Quill Lakes is one of the most complex water management issues in Canada. The Water Security Agency (WSA) has been looking into options to deal with the rising lake levels for a number of years. Every alternative involving storing water or diverting it, comes with significant costs and/or environmental consequences. Last fall, a project that would have limited inflows to the Quill Lakes and reduced the risk to infrastructure did not proceed after the public consultation showed the majority of the public surveyed was not in favour of this approach.

Unapproved drainage into the Quills Lakes is contributing to the rise in water levels and has been for a number of years. WSA will be working with landowners in the area to address the impact of drainage works on lake levels. Landowners have three options: consolidate existing drainage works, install flow control gates which will have to remain closed until water levels go down, or close any drainage works that contribute water to the Quill Lakes.



## Agricultural Water Management Strategy

Last fall, WSA announced the new Agricultural Water Management Strategy and regulations governing agricultural drainage. The strategy focuses on responsible drainage by allowing agricultural drainage as long as the impacts (including downstream flooding) can be mitigated. The new regulatory approach seeks to bring all drainage works into compliance over the next number of years, starting with the highest risk areas. The Quill Lakes Basin is one of the highest risk areas in the province because of the flooding impacts to farmland and infrastructure.

# Rising Water Levels on the Quill Lakes

Over the last number of years, water levels on the Quill Lakes have continued to rise, impacting thousands of acres of farmland and infrastructure.



## Three Options for Responsible Drainage in the Quill Lakes Basin

WSA will be focusing on drainage works around the Quill Lakes creating the most significant impact. Landowners in these areas will be contacted to begin the process of either obtaining an approval or closing drainage works. No new drainage into the lakes will be approved and eventually all drainage works into the Quill Lakes will have to be approved or closed. This means landowners have a few options, including:

### 1. Apply for a drainage approval to consolidate existing drainage works

Existing unapproved works require an approval. This approval will allow drainage on parts of the land, but require building storage on the land that can hold the water drained so that it does not enter the Quill Lakes. It may be possible to alter drainage patterns by concentrating water into other wetlands or sloughs, effectively consolidating wetlands. Consolidation will require approval if it moves water on to another legal parcel even if you own that parcel. Consolidation will usually be done on the scale of a few quarters.

### 2. Apply for an approval for drainage works by adding flow control gates

This approval will require gates be installed and remain closed until the Quill Lakes have been lowered enough so that more water can be added without creating adverse impacts. Given the current high water levels in the Quill Lakes, it may be many years before such gates could be opened.

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### 3. Close drainage works with ditch blocks

The last option for landowners would be to close their drainage works by installing ditch blocks. Closing drainage works restores wetlands and the natural conditions. This would then help to lower the Quill Lakes by storing water that would normally drain into the lakes.

Restoring wetlands to their natural condition will result in the wetlands being the evaporating body of water, rather than the Quill Lakes, and will prevent water from getting to the lakes, which will eventually result in lower lake levels.

#### Four Steps

## How do I apply for drainage approval in the Quill Lakes basin?

01

You will receive a letter from WSA and a representative will contact you to work towards either an approval or closure of your drainage ditches. WSA will provide a list of qualified technical people who can help in the preparation of a drainage application.

02

Work with this qualified technical person to create a sketch plan which identifies the following on your land: wetlands, natural drainage channels, constructed drainage channels, drainage works and proposed mitigation options (consolidated and gated flow controls) that will be built.

03

Work with the qualified technical person to complete the application. You will need to provide written evidence of land control where the landowner is not an applicant but the project has an impact on their land.

04

Submit the completed application form, the sketch plan, written evidence of land control and the non-refundable application fee.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### What are Drainage Works?

Drainage is any action taken to remove, or decrease, the amount of water from the landscape. This includes pumping to remove water, infilling or drainage of sloughs, constructing a dyke or ditch, or deepening channels.

The construction and operation of drainage works where water is moving off one legal parcel onto another legal parcel requires approval from the Water Security Agency (WSA), even if you are the owner of that other parcel. For more information about types of drainage, and activities not considered drainage, see our "What is Drainage?" Fact Sheet.

### My drainage works are part of a Conservation and Development Authority ditch (C and D). Does this mean my drainage works are approved?

In most C and Ds the main drainage ditches are approved. However, most private drainage works that direct water into a C and D ditch are not approved. Unapproved private drainage works that drain into C and D ditches will need to be approved or closed.

### What is WSA doing about the large wetland projects that drain water in the Quill Lakes?

WSA is working with the owners of the large wetland projects in the Quill Lakes basin, to prevent these projects from draining additional water into the Quill Lakes.



*Big Quill Lake. Photo by Lorelei Ford, Water Security Agency*

## Contact

For more information, please visit [wsask.ca/QuillLakes](http://wsask.ca/QuillLakes). If you have further questions please email them to [quill.lakes@wsask.ca](mailto:quill.lakes@wsask.ca) or call Mr. Bryan Osborne, Project Manager, Quill Lakes Basin at

Box 699  
53 Main Street South  
WADENA SK S0A 4J0  
306-338-6251