

News Release

AER seeks feedback on draft requirements for managing tailings in Alberta

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For immediate release.

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Calgary, Alberta (September 17, 2015)...

The Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) is seeking public feedback on its draft directive on fluid tailings management for oil sands mining projects.

As the province's energy regulator, the AER ensures that oil sands development aligns with government policy. Following the release of the Government of Alberta's *Lower Athabasca Region: Tailings Management Framework for Mineable Athabasca Oil Sands (TMF)*, the AER has developed new requirements for tailings management.

"The draft directive represents an evolution in how we will manage tailings by addressing both existing fluid tailings and new fluid tailings growth" said Cal Hill, AER executive vice-president of the Strategy and Regulatory Division. "It establishes the requirements operators must meet in order to ensure that all fluid tailings are ready to reclaim within 10 years of the end of a mine's life."

The draft directive establishes the requirements operators must meet, including application requirements, review and approval process requirements, and performance reporting requirements for fluid tailings volume profiles and tailings management plans as part of a phased approach to implementing the *TMF*. More details about surveillance requirements and enforcement measures will be included in the 2016 edition of the directive.

The AER will set project-specific thresholds based on information submitted in the tailings management applications. Operators must report their fluid tailings volumes annually. The AER will take appropriate compliance and enforcement action if operators are exceeding thresholds.

The AER is engaging with oil sands operators, aboriginal groups, environmental nongovernmental organizations, affected municipalities, and multistakeholder community groups as it seeks feedback on the draft directive.

In March 2015, the AER suspended *Directive 074: Tailings Performance Criteria and Requirements for Oil Sands Mining Schemes* while the new requirements were being developed. The AER expects that oil sands mine operators will continue to proactively manage fluid tailings volumes while we finalize the new directive. Operators are also expected to follow all other regulatory and legislative requirements relating to oil sands mining tailings management.

The draft directive is available on the AER website, and the AER recently launched talk.aer.ca tailings landing page to allow everyone to learn about the history of tailings, access the draft directive, and share their feedback.

The AER is accepting feedback until November 17, 2015.

The AER ensures the safe, efficient, orderly, and environmentally responsible development of hydrocarbon resources over their entire life cycle. This includes allocating and conserving water resources, managing public lands, and protecting the environment while providing economic benefits for all Albertans.

FOR BROADCAST USE:

The Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) is seeking public feedback on draft requirements for tailings management. The new requirements were developed in response to the Government of Alberta's *Lower Athabasca Region: Tailings Management Framework for Mineable Athabasca Oil Sands (TMF)*. The regulator will accept feedback on the draft directive until November 17.

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