

Towards Sustainable Mining

Water Stewardship Framework

Mining Association of Canada (MAC) members endorse the following recognition statements and commitments taken from the International Council of Mining and Metals (ICMM) Position Statement on Water Stewardship¹. In doing so, MAC members recognize that:

1. Water is a precious shared resource with high social, cultural, environmental and economic value. Access to water has been recognised as a right; integral to wellbeing and livelihoods and the spiritual and cultural practices of many communities. It is also essential to the healthy functioning of ecosystems and the services they provide.
2. Water is a vital input for all mining and metals operations – required for the health and wellbeing of employees and at every stage of an operation’s life cycle including closure. The dependency and impact on a shared resource creates material risk for the mining and metals sector that requires effective management.
3. Water challenges are increasing around the world. Earth’s freshwater resources are finite and under pressure from industrialisation, urbanisation, climate change and the needs of a growing global population.
4. These challenges are shared across countries, industry sectors and society. In order to meet demand, a change is needed in the way water is used, managed and shared. This will require collaboration and concerted action from all parties, including government, civil society, business and local communities.
5. Through the Sustainable Development Goals, world leaders have publicly acknowledged the urgency of using and managing water sustainably. The business sector can play a significant role in supporting this approach including through ensuring access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) for employees in the workplace. There is further opportunity for the business sector to support government initiatives through leveraging capital or expertise to improve community WASH and other water related outcomes.
6. Water-related risks and impacts are predominantly experienced by people and ecosystems at the local/catchment level. Therefore companies need to look beyond traditional operations-based water management to the dynamics and interactions of various water users in the wider catchment. Effective water management requires a holistic understanding of hydrology and land use, as well as broader political, economic, social and ecological dynamics that influence water availability and quality.
7. The mining and metals industry has an important role to play in the sustainable management of water resources where companies are active. Proactive and holistic water management strategies can create substantial competitive advantage through reducing water-related risk, identifying opportunities, attracting investment and building trust through improved transparency.

¹ ICMM Position Statement on Water Stewardship (2017): <https://www.icmm.com/water-ps>

MAC members commit to:

Apply strong and transparent corporate water governance

- Publicly disclose the company’s approach to water stewardship.
- Allocate clear responsibilities and accountabilities for water – from board and corporate to site levels.
- Integrate water considerations in business planning – including company strategy, life of asset and investment planning.
- Publicly report company water performance, material risks, opportunities and management response using consistent industry metrics and recognised approaches.

Manage water at operations effectively

- Maintain a water balance⁴ and understand how it relates to the cumulative impact⁵ of other users.
- Set context-relevant water targets or objectives for sites with material water-related risks.
- Proactively manage water quantity and quality to reduce potential socio-environmental impacts and realise opportunities.
- Ensure all employees have access to clean drinking water, gender-appropriate sanitation facilities and hygiene at their workplace.

Collaborate to achieve responsible and sustainable water use

- Identify, evaluate, and respond to catchment-level⁶ water-related risks and opportunities.
- Identify and engage proactively and inclusively with stakeholders that may influence or be affected by a site’s water use and discharge.
- Actively engage on external water governance issues, with governments, local authorities and other stakeholders, to support predictable, consistent and effective regulation that underpins integrated water resource management.
- Support water stewardship initiatives that promote better water use, effective catchment management and contribute to improved water security and sanitation.