

Bulletin 2008-28

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Tailings Performance Criteria and Requirements for Oil Sands Mining Schemes

The Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB/Board) is seeking input on a draft directive to regulate oil sands mining tailings operations. The directive was prepared following direction from the Board to develop tailings performance criteria and specific enforcement actions on an industry-wide basis and to have recommendations ready for industry review by March 2008.

The directive establishes performance criteria for consolidated tailings (CT) operations, a requirement for specific approval and monitoring of CT ponds, a requirement for reporting tailings plans, and changes to the ERCB annual mine plan requirements and approval process to regulate tailings operations. Ideally, the criteria are performance-based, with the discretion left to operators as to how to meet them.

The directive was developed following an assessment of tailings management at existing and approved schemes and consideration of potential tailings performance. ERCB staff also worked closely with Alberta Environment (AENV), Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (SRD), and Alberta Advanced Education and Technology (AET) to develop this directive and ensure that the regulators are coordinated and that ERCB requirements link to the reclamation objectives of AENV and SRD.

This directive forms one component of a larger initiative to deliver performance criteria for conservation and reclamation in the mineable oil sands to assist the ERCB in regulating tailings operations and AENV in achieving its environmental responsibilities.

The draft directive and its accompanying background document describe the proposed regulation of tailings operations. The ERCB conducted a technical review of the Directive with representatives from Alberta's energy industry in May 2008. Industry will have the opportunity to provide input to the ERCB until September 15, 2008. Subsequently, the ERCB will consider all input and publish the requirements for tailings operations in a final directive.

The draft directive and its accompanying background document are available on the ERCB Web site www.ercb.ca under "Industry Zone : Rules Regulations and Requirements : Directives."

Request for Comments

The ERCB invites your feedback on the recommended tailings directive by September 15, 2008. Comments and questions may be forwarded to the ERCB as follows:

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Fax: 780-743-7141

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Questions and answers, updates, and further details on the regulation of tailings will be posted on the ERCB Web site www.ercb.ca under "Projects and Issues" as available.

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