Bow River Reservoir Options

Phase 2: Feasibility Study

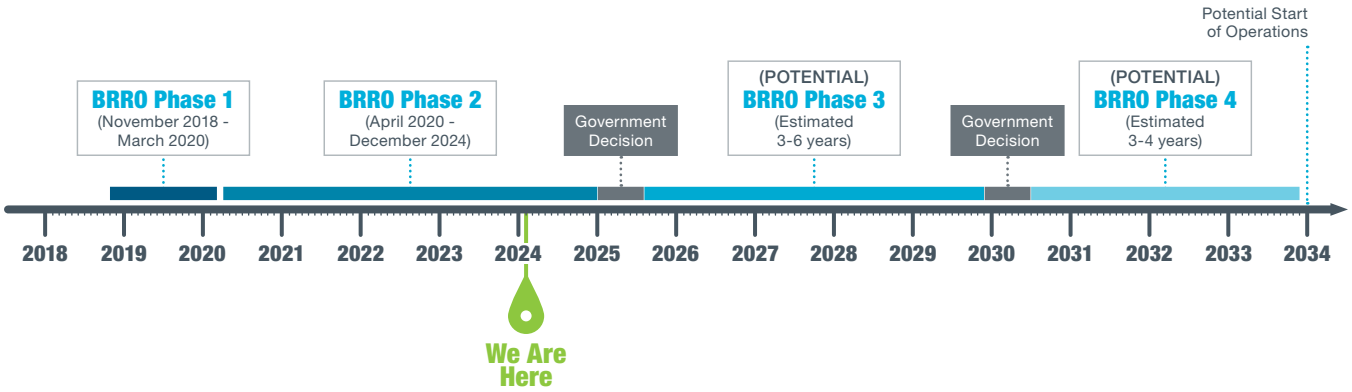
January 2024 Update

Thank you for your continued interest in the Bow River Reservoir Options (BRRO) initiative. As part of our commitment to provide regular updates on the initiative, we would like to share information on the feasibility study with you. This newsletter includes information about the option evaluation framework, indigenous and stakeholder engagement, and the role of reservoirs in drought mitigation.

The current stage of the initiative is indicated in the graphic below. For more details on the BRRO initiative, including feasibility study updates and engagement opportunities, please visit: https://www.alberta.ca/bow-river-reservoir-options.aspx.

We look forward to continuing our discussions with you.

- The Bow River Reservoir Options Study Team



Feasibility Study Evaluation of Three Reservoir Options

The feasibility study continues to evaluate all three reservoir options. No option has been identified as a preferred option at this time. At the completion of the feasibility study, the Alberta government will consider the study findings when making a decision on which of the options, if any, will proceed to Phase 3: Engineering and Regulatory Approval Process. This decision will be informed by an option evaluation framework, and other considerations.

What is the Option Evaluation Framework?

In our ongoing assessment of the three Bow River reservoir options, our focus remains on managing flood and drought risks within the Bow River basin, providing for the sustained health of our river ecosystem, and enhancing the flexibility of our water management strategies. Our option evaluation framework for Phase 2 builds upon the successful site screening methodology from Phase 1, prioritizing simplicity and transparency.

The option evaluation framework for Phase 2 will be used to evaluate the available data and help guide decision-making. The framework will help enable objectivity through a balanced approach that considers how each option scores in various categories such as reservoir performance and the social, environmental, and economic implications of each option. The categories will allow us to carefully examine both the potential impacts and benefits associated with each option.

The option evaluation framework for Phase 2 is being developed considering feedback received during the Phase 1 conceptual assessment and the feasibility study Round 1 engagement so that the initiative remains responsive and inclusive. The draft framework will be presented during Round 2 engagement so that we can consider your feedback before it is finalized. We look forward to sharing more details as they become available.

Indigenous, Public and Stakeholder Engagement

The feasibility study Round 1 engagement report for the BRRO initiative will be released in early 2024. This report analyzes the data and insights gained from Indigenous communities, stakeholder and public feedback collected from May 2021 to March 2023.

Planning for Round 2 engagement is currently underway. Like Round 1, Round 2 will offer Indigenous communities, stakeholders and the public the opportunity to share insights and feedback with the BRRO study team. Stay tuned for Round 2 engagement details.

Learn more at: https://www.alberta.ca/bow-river-reservoir-options.aspx
Contact us today at epa.bowbasin@gov.ab.ca or call 310-3773, toll-free.

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Spotlight on: Drought Mitigation and Reservoirs: A Crucial Water Management Strategy

In 2023, Alberta experienced drought in many parts of the province due to a below average snowpack in winter 2022-23 and below average precipitation in most areas during the spring and summer, which meant less runoff filling rivers, lakes and reservoirs. This contributed to water shortages in some parts of the province, especially in southern Alberta. During 2023, the Alberta government continued to monitor conditions and worked closely with water users and local governments to help manage and conserve water where possible.

Both public (Government of Alberta owned) and private reservoirs play a role in helping to mitigate the severity of drought in times of low snowpack and/or low precipitation. They capture and hold water when it is available, such as during the spring runoff, and release water as needed during dry periods. The photograph below is an example of a reservoir (Oldman Reservoir) in Southern Alberta.

The Alberta government actively monitors water supplies and downstream needs to determine the amount of water that is released from reservoirs throughout the year. This helps provide Indigenous communities, municipalities, farmers, industry, and other water licence holders downstream of the reservoirs with access to water and helps provide flow rates that can support the aquatic environment.

For more information about the current drought situation in Alberta, visit alberta.ca/drought.

Learn more at: https://www.alberta.ca/bow-river-reservoir-options.aspx
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