

THE BEST INFORMATION LINE**From your Chairman...**

Hello Everyone,

Wow! How mother nature can turn on a dime! Adam and the crew are busy beavers, getting close to maxing out water flows!

I wanted to share some insight on an article that the Western Producer published a couple of weeks ago. There have been a few negative comments on the 2027/2028 sign up fees on new acres of \$500.00 per acre.

Here is the article in case some of you have missed it. There is a highlight on page 3 in red.

"SMRID is looking to increase another 1,500 acres, and given the "Flood" of demand, the price has increased to \$10,000.00 (that's per acre just to have water rights).

Even with the 150% increase, that may be considered conservative, given the recent private bids in the area. A 262 - acre combined parcel went up for auction on the Highway 3 corridor in Taber in 2025, netting \$4.04 million at \$15,400 per acre.

That's just the right to irrigate. There was no land associated with that. That's just the irrigation rights, which they could move to whatever piece of land they wanted" Said Westwood"

Have a great day!

Steve Primrose
Chairman
SSRID No.1 Inc.



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Southern Alberta water rights explode in value

Article in The Western Producer July 16, 2026 by Greg Price.

Water rights are becoming increasingly expensive lottery tickets to produce high-value crops that power nearly a third of the province's gross domestic product.

Farmers are still thirsty for irrigated acres, given the price at which they are selling in southern Alberta.

Those attending the recent Alberta Crop Diagnostic Day at the Lethbridge Polytechnic Research Farm heard that prices for water rights have jumped in some bidding structures by nearly 300 per cent in just a few years.

The St. Mary River Irrigation District has the largest capacity of water conveyance of the 1.8 million acres of agricultural land that is irrigated in Alberta.

In 2020, the St. Mary River Irrigation District was among nine districts to agree to an aggressive timeline of infrastructure rehabilitation/construction projects, with an influx of \$815 million in funding as part of the Irrigation Modernization Project. SMRID put its hand up for 29 projects in eight years, some involving large systems as long as 10 kilometres featuring five metre diameter pipe.

A plebiscite was held later in 2022 under the Irrigation District Act to release more acres for irrigation, which was approved by 91 per cent of farmers with existing water rights.

"I think they recognized somewhere along their farming journey, even if it was two or three generations that the district has expanded over the years, it led to their successful farms growing," David Westwood, general manager of SMRID, said in his water management presentation at the field day, held just east of Lethbridge.

"They wanted to be able to pay it forward and see southern Alberta continue to prosper, and a lot of them wanted to expand themselves."

That expansion meant an extra 80,000 acres of capacity on top of the existing 500,000-plus acres.

Easing into the expansion slowly, 15,000 acres of the expanded capacity were released, and a lottery began in 2023 and carried over to the following spring of 2024. Farmers could apply for 150-acre increments, with a price tag of \$4,000 per acre.

Farmers applied for 33,000 acres in new water rights, more than doubling what was up for grabs.

Southern Alberta water rights explode in value

Con't Page 3

"There's a big pent-up demand for more irrigation. Those 15,000 are all now completely out, and they are on the assessment roll," Westwood said about the newly irrigated acres, along with some purchased as a form of insurance on dry corners.

"When you want to irrigate new acres in the province, you have to go through quite a few rigorous steps. All the districts follow the same thing. Basically, the province determines, is this good land worth irrigating? They don't want to waste water on land that's poor quality."

SMRID is looking to release another 1,500 acres, and given the "flood" of demand, the price has increased to \$10,000.

Even with the 150 per cent increase, that may be considered conservative, given the recent private bids in the area. A 262-acre combined parcel went up for auction on the Highway 3 corridor in Taber in 2025, netting \$4.04 million at \$15,400 an acre.

"That's just the right to irrigate. There was no land associated with that. That's just the irrigation rights, which they then could move to whatever piece of land they wanted," said Westwood.

"We've already contacted the next round of people who were in the lottery. As far as I know, everyone who was next up has not rejected that offer (\$10,000 an acre). They're all planning on taking their acres, so we'll see."

Despite representing only five per cent of the province's cultivated land for agricultural use, the 11 irrigation districts help farmers produce 30 per cent (\$5.4 billion) of Alberta's overall GDP, according to Westwood.

Of that \$5.4 billion, \$3.2 billion is in labour income alone, supporting approximately 46,000 full-time equivalent jobs, and \$1.3 billion in annual revenue.

"Irrigated agriculture punches way above its weight," said Westwood.

THE BEST INFORMATION LINE**IMPORTANT REMINDERS****DISTRICT FINANCES**

- **Discount of 2% on Base Rate invoices if payment made prior to July 31, 2026**
- **Discount of 1% on Base Rate Invoices if payment made prior to August 30, 2026**
- **For more information or have any questions on this discount, contact the District office.**

A friendly reminder to all irrigators that, per District bylaws, all base rates and water delivery fees are to be paid to the District by December 31st of each year. Any accounts left unpaid after December 31st are subject to interest at a rate of 2% per month until the entirety of the arrears have been paid. Invoices for custom work are due within thirty (30) days of the date first noted on the invoice for said custom work.

In addition, any irrigator with an account left unpaid after January 31st shall be charged the upcoming season's base rates, which must be paid (in addition to all arrears) in advance of any water being turned on for that irrigator.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

The SSRID office has the ability to accept various methods of payment options. A payment receipt will be issued once the payment has been received.

- **Cheque** - bring in your cheque during business hours or sent in the mail.
- **Online banking** - South Saskatchewan Irrigation District No. 1 set up as a payee.
- **Etransfer** - email to ssrid1@sasktel.net

Please reach out to Krystine directly at (306) 867 9923 to discuss these secure & efficient means of payment.

OUR MISSION

To be a leader in Saskatchewan irrigation and foster growth, efficiency, prosperity & sustainability in our district.

OUR VISION

- Strive to convey the cleanest water possible at a fair price.
- Establish positive relationships with district consumers, governments, and the broader community.
- Secure a shared revenue-stream from local, provincial, and federal sources, to enhance the viability & longevity of the district.
- Increase irrigable acres in our district by 20,000 before the year 2030.
- Replace failing canals with pipelines, wherever feasible.
- Rely on local personnel, businesses, and manufacturing, wherever feasible, to fulfill the operations & maintenance obligations of the district.

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