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## Regional Aquatics Monitoring Program (RAMP) Releases 2012 Annual Technical Report

May 6 2013

**Fort McMurray, Alberta** – The Regional Aquatics Monitoring Program (RAMP) has released its 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Technical Report. The report contains data and information related to its 2012 monitoring of climate and hydrology, water quality, benthic invertebrate communities, sediment quality, fish populations and fish health, and lakes sensitive to acidity in the Lower Athabasca Region.

From a regional perspective, the 2012 monitoring program did find specific localized changes in some watersheds when compared to pre-development conditions, but did not detect large-scale changes related to oil sands development.

At a localized scale, the following observations were noted in 2012:

- High water levels due to significant rainfall at the beginning of September 2012 influenced monitoring results for hydrology, water quality, benthic invertebrate communities and sediment quality, and fish populations, particularly eastern tributaries of the Athabasca River.
- Sediment quality in channels of the Athabasca River Delta (ARD) contained lower concentrations of organic carbon and hydrocarbons than in past years. While polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) were largely of a petrogenic (i.e., petroleum) origin, the concentration of total PAHs at all stations in the ARD was lower than measured in 2011.
- Concentrations of various water quality variables (some metals, ions, nutrients) in several tributaries of the Athabasca River (e.g., MacKay River, Clearwater River, Jackpine Creek) were higher than had been observed in the past due to their close association with the increase in suspended solids in water related to higher water levels and flows caused by significant rainfall in September.
- Benthic invertebrate communities in Fort Creek continue to have a lower abundance and richness compared to other watercourses in the region.
- Fish health data indicated that external abnormalities in fish observed in 2012 were within the historical range for fish species in the region and were consistent with studies conducted prior to oil sands development in the Athabasca region.

The full Technical Report is available for viewing and downloading on RAMP's website at <http://www.ramp-alberta.org/ramp/results.aspx>.

All data contained in the 2012 Technical Report will be incorporated into the RAMP database and made publicly available on the RAMP website by the end of May 2013.

### About RAMP:

The Regional Aquatics Monitoring Program (RAMP) is a science-based, multi-stakeholder aquatic environmental monitoring program initiated in 1997. RAMP is one of a number of programs monitoring the aquatic environment in the Lower Athabasca region of Alberta. The intent of RAMP is to determine, evaluate and communicate the state of the aquatic environment and any changes that may result from resource development within the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.

RAMP is continuing with its aquatic monitoring programs as part of the transition to the new Joint Canada-Alberta Implementation Plan Oil Sands Monitoring (JOSM) program for the Athabasca Region. Accordingly, RAMP is increasingly aligning its program with JOSM, while providing information and data, and knowledge regarding the logistics of field programs in the region and oil sands area information during this transition.

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