

B. C. TAP WATER ALLIANCE

Caring for, Monitoring, and Protecting
British Columbia's Community Water
Supply Sources

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The B.C. Tap Water Alliance and the Society Promoting Environmental Conservation (SPEC) Press Release

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Immediate Moratorium Called for Logging in Provincial Drinking Watersheds

Vancouver - SPEC is demanding that the provincial government implements an immediate moratorium on logging, mining and cattle grazing in community drinking watersheds across B.C. Community watersheds represent only 1.5% of the provincial land base. SPEC's demand follows Premier Dosanjh's promise to introduce legislation to protect public drinking water sources. On January 25, Dosanjh and BC Environment Minister Ian Waddell released a Drinking Water Protection Plan as the first in a series of province-wide public consultations that began on Vancouver Island.

"At the first public consultation meeting on January 26 in Nanaimo, Environment Ministry staff claimed that logging approved through the *Forest Practices Code* protects drinking watersheds on Crown lands. That assumption, however, doesn't hold any water," said Will Koop, SPEC BC Watershed Campaigner. "The *Forest Practices Code* as applied to community watersheds is a joke. If this is the Environment Ministry's way of protecting water supplies, then this government is incapable of protecting BC's drinking water in a fundamental way."

The Environment Ministry, which is taking the lead in pushing for watershed protection, also advocates resource developments in community watersheds which resulted in forcing communities, like Erickson, to pay the high cost of treating their water. "Only a moratorium on logging and other activities in community watersheds, and immediate restoration in logged watersheds, will demonstrate the Premier's good faith in his promise to protect drinking water sources," said Koop.

On January 31, the government is holding a third daylong consultation meeting in Kelowna. In 1996 Kelowna residents contracted illnesses related to cryptosporidium, a pathogen identified in cattle feces that finds its way into water supplies. Although the meeting may focus on Kelowna's situation, Koop is concerned that critical information on more than 60 other community watersheds in the Okanagan and Shuswap regions that also have watersheds threatened by cattle grazing and logging, will be ignored.

“The recently approved Okanagan/Shuswap LRMP (Local Resource Management Plan) process fails to protect the sources of drinking water for the Interior. The LRMP supports cattle grazing and logging,” said Koop. “The Lillooet LRMP, currently under consideration, is adopting the same resource-based formula as the Okanagan. Despite what we have been told, the Ministry of Forests is calling the shots, not the Environment Ministry.” The provincial Chief Forester and 40 District Forest managers have discretionary powers to dictate resource activities.

Forest companies which want to resume logging and road-building in the Clinton Creek Provincial Watershed Reserve, which supplies drinking water to Clinton, are being opposed by the High Bar First Nations Band. Industrial logging 10 years ago so damaged the Clinton Creek headwaters, that the High Bar Band wants no resumption of logging in an area from which they draw their drinking water.

“We will only gain confidence in the Environment Ministry’s role as the lead agency in drinking water protection, when arbitrary powers to dictate land use practices such as logging and cattle grazing are removed from the Ministry of Forests,” said Koop. “This includes severing the Forest Ministry’s requirement for logging plans and an Allowable Annual Cut on drinking watersheds.”

Public meetings to discuss the province’s proposed drinking water protection plan is being closely watched by numerous groups including the BC Tap Water Alliance, the Valhalla Wilderness Society, the Georgia Strait Alliance, First Nations and local municipalities.

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