

B. C. TAP WATER ALLIANCE

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

Email: info@bctwa.org
Website: www.bctwa.org



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ALLIANCE REPORT DETAILS RESOURCE CRIME OF THE CENTURY

Vancouver – The B.C. Tap Water Alliance today released its long-awaited report about the history of British Columbia's drinking Watershed Reserves. 284 pages long, *From Wisdom to Tyranny*, is based on government records, reports, information, interviews and over a hundred photo and government map exhibits the Alliance collated over a period of ten years. As the first such investigation of its kind in British Columbia, it provides a thorough, compelling but disturbing analysis of the secret, organized plot by provincial government administrators to subvert and "invade" hundreds of Watershed Reserves.

Established since the early 1900s, even before the first provincial Park, BC's *Land Act* Reserves were Crown lands withdrawn or withheld from "disposition", the standard term used to describe the sale of land and leasing, the licensing or permitting authorized by government agencies for resource use, i.e., road building, logging, grazing, mining, etc. The Watershed Reserves were created "in the public interest" for community water supply purposes. By the 1970s, there were over 300 such Reserves, and more by the 1980s.

BC Forest Service memos detail how water purveyors were stonewalled while its forest industry clients engaged in public relations exercises to gain public approval for logging in watersheds and for opening the areas up to other uses as well. The conspiracy in BC, which had evolved from similar events taking place in the United States, became widespread by the early 1980s, and under a policy called "sympathetic administration" the newly formed Ministry of Forests secretly began to transfer the forest lands in these protected Reserves to the "timber harvesting land base". Internal government dissent and opposition was slowly silenced. Eventually, some of these Reserves were stripped of their protection, but by the 1990s the protected status of the remainder was simply ignored in all regional and sub-regional Land Use planning processes.

"The evidence is plentiful and clear. Factions within government (primarily the Forest Service) have been intent on erasing the existing legal status of BC's drinking Watershed Reserves. It is a tragedy that our government has turned a blind-eye to the theft of these water sources, primarily for short term timber supply. By ignoring the wisdom of protecting this critical legacy, they have gambled with millions of peoples' health", laments Will Koop, author of the report and Coordinator of the BC Tap Water Alliance. "Now many of these community watersheds produce inferior quality water that needs to be filtered and treated and there's frequently less water available in the dry season. British Columbians have long-established rights to legislatively protected drinking water sources. Government's involvement in "cooking the books" in the July, 1997 Supreme Court *Paris Judgment* must be examined. We are calling for a formal, comprehensive investigation with regard to the administration of these Reserves."

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For more information, contact Will Koop: email, info@bctwa.org, or (604) 224-4717

Information about, and excerpts from, the book (i.e., the Executive Summary) are available on the Alliance's website, www.bctwa.org.