

BC South Peace River Stockmen's Association

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COMMENTS on the *Water Sustainability Act* Legislative Proposal

BC South Peace River Stockmen's Association – November 1, 2013

CROWN RANGE

- The WSA legislative proposal does not specifically state how, or if, livestock water and access will be regulated on crown range
- The unrecorded historic use of water should be authorized under the *Range Act and Forest and Range Practices Act*
- The continued availability of water and access is integral to the sustainable use of forage and could be included in the existing grazing tenure document by amending the definition of AUM to include the water rights and access.
- There could also be questions/concerns as to the humane treatment of animals should government legislation limit or deny access to water on range
- Legislation to license crown unrecorded usage on +/-2000 range tenures would bury the government and tenure holders in unnecessary paperwork and expense

LAND USE DECISIONS

- This Legislative Proposal fails to recognize the importance of water for food production as a priority equivalent to essential human needs
- We support the establishment of an Agricultural Water Reserve. This cannot be limited to ALR, many food producers operate on lands outside the ALR boundaries
- Water Sustainability Planning must have a strong agricultural representation on the advisory committee.
- Retention of the Environmental Appeal Board is necessary to ensure that cattlemen have that avenue to appeal other than through the courts
- There is a need for an avenue for appeal when essential household use is placed ahead of agricultural use
- The legislative proposal does not adequately address the implications to food production where industry is developing huge water storage reservoirs (ALR) that interrupt natural drainages to historic agricultural uses.
- The legislative proposal does not adequately address the implications to food production where industry uses water from agriculturally funded water source reservoirs on range land

SURFACE WATER

- This Legislative Proposal fails to recognize the importance of water for food production as a priority equivalent to essential human needs
- Where off-stream water developments replace a previously unrecorded use, the license holder should not be required to transfer the volume from existing license volumes
- There is provision for livestock to water from a stream on crown range as a historic use (page 51). This is also a necessary practice on privately held rangelands. The goal is to have the Agriculture Water Reserve (possibly through the Water Working Group) recognize unrecorded use without requiring licensing.
- Water for any agricultural food production should be given equal priority as an essential human use (i.e. water for feedlot not discriminated against)

- Small dugouts (primarily for food production) should be exempt from licensing; but large volume water storage (developed primarily for industrial use) should be required to comply with licensing and reporting

UNRECORDED USE ON PRIVATE LAND

- We are pleased that unrecorded use is recognized in the legislative proposal, however we would like more protection for unrecorded use in times of scarcity
- It is essential to retain watering capabilities (unrecorded use) on private land similar to crown range. There is provision for livestock to water from a stream on crown range as a historic use (*page 51*). This is also a necessary practice on privately held rangelands. The goal is to have the Agriculture Water Reserve (possibly through the Water Working Group) recognize unrecorded use without requiring licensing
- The legislative proposal does not require small (non-agricultural) holdings, with domestic livestock, to register their water usages; so therefore should not establish rules that require bona-fide livestock producers to do so

MEASURING AND REPORTING

- BC South Peace River Stockmen support the decision to exempt domestic ground water users from licensing and reporting and that domestic use includes all domestic livestock
- We support metering of water for food production only in the most extraordinary circumstance, and only as a last resort. The requirement to meter water use will be an added expense and it will be difficult and time consuming to keep meters working properly.
- In the extraordinary circumstance that volume reporting is required then the most simple, non-mechanical, method must be employed

GROUND WATER

- BC South Peace River Stockmen support the decision to exempt domestic ground water users from licensing and reporting and that domestic use includes all domestic livestock
- Agricultural operations cannot be required to pay for identification of ground water and surface water interaction
- It is unclear what the definition of “well pit” is. If this includes dugouts , then we do not agree with the statement (page 43) that “banning well pits for new water supply wells....”
- The government should require authorization for new wells only in areas where there is frequent scarcity, where streams are fully allocated, or where the new well is primarily for industrial use and therefore a large volume user.

CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL FLOWS

- We are pleased that the proposal included retaining FITFIR
- We support reducing junior licenses according to FITFIR
- We support curtailing non-essential household uses (i.e. filling pools, washing cars)
- Adoption of water efficiency techniques is best achieved with funding assistance