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Nov. 14-2013.

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RE: WATER SUSTAINABILITY ACT CHANGES.

South Kamloops Stockmen's Association

c/o Lucille Dempsey, Secretary
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Submission to the Water Sustainability Act - November, 2013

Ranchers operating in the Thompson and Nicola watersheds have voiced real concerns that changes to the Water Act may negatively impact the sustainability of their ranching operations. The competing interests for water now and in the future have the potential to jeopardize the supply of water necessary to maintain crop production and livestock watering. These interior valleys receive little moisture throughout the year so reliance on storage and controlled release of water are crucial to the security of food production and livestock operations in this area.

We wish to emphasize the following issues in drafting and implementing a modernization of the Water Act:

- Assurance that agriculture and local food production is considered a primary priority over other uses. The retention of First In Time, First In Right form of licensing to protect the security of food production must be continued.
- Since stream health is high on the list of objectives, additional water storage infrastructure must be constructed to take advantage of excess seasonal water (spring freshet) that can be released later in the season. This reduces stream erosion, protects fish habitat, and supplies the water for agriculture when it is needed – a shared benefit for all. However government and the public must acknowledge some recognition and compensation for the rancher built and maintained storage infrastructure that currently exists.
- Water currently allocated to agriculture must remain tied to agriculture, so plans for an Agriculture Water Reserve is welcomed. Water rights and allocation must be linked to lands in the Agricultural Land Reserve but priced so that the resulting food production is economically viable and sustainable into the future.
- Incentives should be made available for the implementation of new technology and irrigation upgrades that encourage conservation.
- New groundwater wells that reduce or eliminate existing above ground water rights must be controlled.
- Recognition of historic in-stream livestock watering on crown range and private lands is mandatory. Incentives for off-stream livestock watering without encumbering existing irrigation licences are required.

Local food production has become a national priority and government along with the public has an obligation to promote and assist in maintaining agriculture in the province of BC.

SOUTH KAMLOOPS STOCKMEN'S ASSOCIATION


Lucille Dempsey,

Secretary