



BRITISH COLUMBIA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Representing the Beef Cattle Industry of British Columbia

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Statement: Water Is Critical for Ranching and for Fish

Although no one will disagree that water is critical for fish, this resource is also important for the ranching families that provide food for our province.

Minister Penner's announcement about temporarily restricting water use by ranching families on the Upper Nicola River has raised concerns about short and long term impacts on the ranching community.

Ranchers in the Nicola Valley have been hard hit this year by successive droughts and have demonstrated their commitment to water conservation and stewardship. The ranching families affected by this irrigation ban have utilized the services of the Riparian Stewardship Program offered by the BC Cattlemen's Association and made approximately \$100,000 worth of improvements in the Upper Nicola River. Some of the work done recently includes installation of fencing along the river for stream bank conservation and improved fish habitat; installation of watering troughs away from the river for livestock; installation of low flow water conservation nozzles on the irrigation systems; and have voluntarily reduced their irrigation water usage to 45% of the volume allotted by their water license.

Our goal as an association is to help ranchers upgrade their businesses in an environmentally sustainable manner. This temporary water ban is costly for the ranching community. The Association will be working with the Ministry of Environment and the Department of Fisheries to strengthen communications and hopefully avoid future bans.

The Association strongly feels that when agricultural water users have their access restricted, through no fault of their own, that government needs to compensate ranchers for the loss of forage production.

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