



BRITISH COLUMBIA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Representing the Beef Cattle Industry of British Columbia

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Water Sustainability Act Framework: BCCA's Thoughts and Concerns

Water is an important resource for the sustainability of BC's beef industry and vital in the Province's food security. As such, it is important that the beef industry is properly addressed in the new water policy changes to ensure that water rights and volumes continue to be available to agriculture in the future.

The following are concerns that have been brought forward by the beef cattle sector that have not been addressed by the new framework:

1. There is no mention of Food Security in the Policy Directions (Pg 3).
2. Agriculture and future food security must be a top priority, currently there is no mention of agriculture in the top seven priorities; Agriculture land must be supplied by Agriculture water. The continued primary priority remains the protection of streams and ecosystems; however bodies of water are the important source in maintaining the streams and surrounding ecosystems.
3. Streams act as the pathway for water between the bodies and can appear and disappear tomorrow. Ranchers should not have to augment or maintain flows in streams which under normal conditions would dry for certain periods (Pg 4).
4. Ranchers should receive compensation for water rights (licences) that are taken away, as well as offsets for a loss of volume or when required to supply water for other users.
5. Ranchers should be recognized and compensated for developing and building infrastructure that contributes to improved/increased fish habitat or ecological flow (Pg 4).
6. The province must allocate financial resources for water storage and infrastructure; government needs to take responsibility for regular maintenance and inspection of water storage and infrastructure (Pg 9).
7. There is still no provision for recognizing direct and in-stream access for livestock watering in the framework. As stated in the Ranching Task Force document, "WAM needs to secure access to water that will meet the needs of livestock on range and private land", as well as "develop regulations under the Water Act that facilitate off-stream livestock watering and help secure stream health". The Province needs to recognize the need for livestock producers to have access

to historic volumes of water and to allow cattle access to water in-stream on crown range and private lands (in most locations it is not always feasible to construct “off stream” watering troughs, in particular on cattle ranges).

8. Water in agriculture needs to remain in agriculture in order to secure access to water to meet the needs of livestock on range and private land. The First in Time, First in Right allocation system is the only viable option presented that ensures that water previously allocated for agriculture use remains in agriculture. In addition, it is the only option that insures water is not turned into a commodity.
9. An increase in water fees or rentals must not make it impossible for B.C ranchers to compete with our Alberta counterparts or with supply managed sectors. Many farmers cannot afford to pay more for water.
10. If the Province is going to regulate groundwater, existing agriculture wells must be grandfathered (Pg 10). The threshold level needs to be set at a point where most farms will fall below, and therefore will not be considered a large water user.
11. A framework must be developed to deal with conflicts arising from various water users, such as a conflict between fish and livestock/forage during periods of drought.
12. Water is a public trust and therefore should not be segregated or accommodated to specific cultural groups.
13. The Province must consult with agriculture users and groups when establishing Provincial Water Objectives.

The BC Cattlemen’s Association continues to be supportive of the modernization of the Water Act, however the Province must address our concerns to ensure that water is made available for the beef industry today and in the future. Water is an essential element to food production. Growing food is equally as important as providing safe drinking water in achieving food security for British Columbians.

For more information:

- BCCA Water Position Statement
<http://www.cattlemen.bc.ca/docs/waterstmt.pdf>
- BCCA WAM submission
<http://www.cattlemen.bc.ca/docs/bcca%20wam%20formal%20submission%20-%20final.pdf>
- Ranching Task Force 2009 document
<http://www.ranchingtaskforce.gov>

bc.ca/attachments/ranching_task_force_2009.pdf

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