



BRITISH COLUMBIA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Representing the Beef Cattle Industry of British Columbia

AGRI CENTRE - #4 - 10145 DALLAS DRIVE, KAMLOOPS, B.C. V2C 6T4 PHONE (250) 573-3611 FAX (250) 573-5155

August 2, 2024

Honourable David Eby
Premier of BC
PO Box 9041, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E1
premier@gov.bc.ca

BCCA File #: 2024-039
SENT BY EMAIL

Dear Premier Eby,

RE: Request to Consider Fire Risk When Setting Drought Response Levels

With wildfire risk escalating and drought conditions worsening, the BC Cattlemen's Association emphasizes the critical importance of irrigated agricultural zones in protecting communities from wildfire dangers.

Each week, Regional Drought Response Teams and Technical Working Groups convene to assess drought severity across different watersheds. We understand that the focus of the Technical Working Group is to monitor water levels and develop long-term preparedness strategies. After engaging in these weekly discussions, it has become clear that there is a gap between wildfire prevention and drought management efforts.

Currently, the emphasis is primarily on ensuring fish survivability. While BCCA acknowledges the importance of protecting fish, we are concerned that other critical factors, such as green zones for wildfire prevention, are being overlooked.

To offer a solution, BCCA recommends broadening the scope of the Regional Technical Drought Working Groups to include an assessment of wildfire threat implications to local risk before making decisions about curtailing agricultural irrigation. It is our view that a community's fire risk threat should be a determining factor for decisions to curtail irrigation. Human needs and safety must be prioritized over fish and wildlife.

The BC Cattlemen's Association urges you to:

1. Immediately amend the requirements for the Technical Drought Working Groups to incorporate fire risk and prevention into their decision-making process.
2. Permit moderate irrigation (at a 75% reduction) when a Section 88 order is in effect to help maintain a "Green Zone" for wildfire prevention.

The BC Wildfire Service acknowledges the critical role of agriculture, particularly irrigation, in combating, preventing, and extinguishing fires. In 2017, farmers and ranchers were allowed into evacuation areas to use their irrigation practices to aid firefighting efforts. Irrigation helps create "green zones" that make it more difficult for fires to ignite and provides a valuable means of protecting communities and key

infrastructure. Most irrigation, especially in the Interior, occurs in the valleys and lowlands suitable for farming. These areas are also where most residents live and major transportation corridors are located.

Swift action is essential to reduce risks to communities and infrastructure before Drought Level 5 and Section 88 fish population protection orders are implemented. While we fully understand and value the need to protect wild fish and their habitats, this should not come at an unacceptable cost. We cannot afford a repeat of situations like Lytton or Jasper and believe these recommendations should be viewed as part of the solution, rather than a threat to fish.

Thank you for your consideration and if you would like to discuss this further please contact our General Manager Kevin Boon at (250) 320-3611.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Stump', enclosed within a large, loopy oval shape.

Werner Stump, President

*c.c.: Hon. Nathan Cullen, Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Hon. Pam Alexis, Minister of Agriculture and Food*