



Keepers of the Water

STEWARDS OF OUR GREAT ARCTIC OCEAN BASIN

Keepers of the Water: Strategic planning for UNESCO presentation (October 1, 2016)

August 31, 2016 2:00 p.m.

Present on call: Jule Asterisk, Bob Cameron, Diane Giroux, Caleb Behn

Threats to Wood Buffalo National Park:

1. Dam complex affects water levels in the delta: Bennett Dam, proposed Site C dam
45 to 48% of water is held behind the dam complexes, released during the winter months, making flows as high as 400% above normal winter flows
 - Very complicated for ice bridge construction (eg. community of Fox Lake)
 - This affects travel and access to traditional areas
 - Compounded effects throughout the basin
 - Great Slave Lake is likely at least 10 feet lower than historic levels
 - Concerns about wildlife: muskrat houses. Increases water levels in winter can flood them

Appendix to the Alberta / BC Transboundary Water agreement (Bob)

- Water discharge stations shows a dramatic decline
- Alberta's command of watershed science is in doubt: also see governance (Caleb)

Matt Labell WWF re: Health of Canadian Rivers

- Alberta's monitoring efforts on the Peace River did not allow him to make health assessments of the river due to lack of information
- Areas of data deficiencies, both quality and quantity were noted
- Keepers of the Water recommends that data gaps can be filled by Traditional knowledge holders who have noted species reduction and water level changes

2. Climate Change

- Water levels in the north have been measurably affected by climate change, as noted by Traditional knowledge holders
- This affects wildlife movement, behaviour, reproduction, and continuity

3. Encroachment of Agriculture

- Fears of disease from wildlife to livestock: proposal to destroy all wood buffalo in 1990's
- Multi-year project by First Nations, Metis and government in Fort Resolution, NWT, harvesting calves by community, hand feeding them and caring for them. They were able to reduce brucellosis (affects bison reproduction), but unable to affect tuberculosis rates

- Originally wood bison were not actually listed as wildlife in Alberta, due to being domestically farmed (this has changed)
- There is a group of farmers that would like to farm up to the boundaries of Wood Buffalo National Park. Alberta government will have to address this when the Peace River Land Use Plan process begins.
- This entire planning process may be in question, as the first authorized Alberta land use plan, the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP) has been successfully challenged by First Nations and the Alberta Government review panel confirms their input was not included.
- https://www.landuse.alberta.ca/LandUse%20Documents/Lower%20Athabasca%20Regional%20Plan%20Review%20Panel%20Recommendations_2016-06-22.pdf

4. Oil/tarsands

- Under normal operations, between 40 and 85 tonnes of particulate matter are released into the air every day
- Video from Environment Canada (released by Pembina Institute and Canadian Physicians for the Environment) shows this pollution mainly heading NE, toward WBNP
<https://www.pembina.org/blog/new-images-of-air-pollution-in-alberta>
- Mercury is an ongoing concern, along with PAH's and even Teflon
- Northern contaminants program website has the details (Diane)
- Major body of data which the governments of Canada and Alberta generated on air and water is publically available, listing tables of contaminants (Bob)
- New fingerprint evidence shows tailings ponds are leaking into the Athabasca river
- First Nations have made many unsuccessful attempts to participate in the Joint Oil Sands Monitoring Program
- Under this program, only 1 percent of funding went for field work
- There has been only a very limited gathering of Traditional Ecological Knowledge

5. Governance

- Yukon government has now decided to allow mining within parks
- Alberta allows mining and other development within parks
- Alberta government proposed carving out part of Wood Buffalo National park in the 1970's for the purpose of mining gypsum
- In May 2016 during a presentation by the Transboundary Secretariat, they did not mention Wood Buffalo National park as a "value to be protected"
- International consulting firm Golder, in a report to the oilsands industry (Bob) describes a method to use Lake Claire as a source of water, in case there was not enough water in the Athabasca River
- It seems that Wood Buffalo National Park is not recognized as an international heritage site by engineering and water resource professionals in Canada, and some government commissioned agencies
- Prime Minister of Canada and Premier of British Columbia are flying in the face of UNESCO and upstream effects by proceeding with the Site C dam while in court, and while environmental regulations and those governing water are being re-evaluated. This is not responsible or ethical.
- After 10 years under the Conservatives, Canada is suffering from a science deficit. Many documented incidents include destruction of nine Environment Canada libraries, ...
- Parks Canada has succeeded with the Peace Athabasca Delta Environmental Monitoring Program (PADEMP) in terms of engaging First Nations

- This model could be expanded to form a true relationship between Traditional Ecological Knowledge holders and governments
- Co-management with Indigenous peoples is a long term goal

Also important is connection between regulatory failure and harm to the environment, as it relates to inability to implement UNDRIP. Failure to implement UNDRIP is also a failure to protect a world heritage site.