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BC Wildlife Federation Congratulates Minister Penner for Nicola Decision

Vancouver, BC – BC Wildlife Federation is congratulating the Minister of Environment Barry Penner on his bold move in proclaiming regulations under the fish protection act, and then acting decisively on them to protect the Kokanee of the Nicola system

“Unfortunate but necessary,” said Mel Arnold, BC Wildlife Federation president. “Within hours of the curtailment of water use, hundreds of Kokanee began moving upstream past sections of the river that had been virtually dry”.

The Federation also congratulates water licence holders that have recognized the drought conditions in the Nicola drainage and have reduced or eliminated their water use at considerable loss of forage for winter stock feeding.

“It is difficult for our membership not to have some sympathy for the ranchers on the Nicola system who are faced with decreasing cattle prices, coupled with increased forage prices as a result of the drought in the southern Interior, and the lack of moisture on the southern prairies where alternate supplies are reduced.” adds Arnold. “However, we have reached a point where strong actions were required to protect other values that contribute to the interior way of life.”

BC Wildlife Federation also notes that the Minister reacted to a low-flow condition on a specific part of the Nicola System but the whole watershed is under stress from this year’s lack of moisture and if climate change is occurring, that stress will continue to increase. BCWF urges the Minister to begin drought planning for next year including the passage of ground water legislation and, in the case of the Nicola, legislating the Nicola Water Use Management Plan.

Arnold agrees that Minister Penner’s decision could not have been an easy decision to make, as it will undoubtedly hurt some members of the agricultural community. “That’s unfortunate, but it will ensure the long-term survival of the Kokanee and the associated flora and fauna that depend on water to survive. It’s a balancing act and after all that’s what government is supposed to do.” said Arnold.

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For further information contact Patti MacAhonic, Executive Director of the BCWF at 604-291-9990 extension 230 or at patti@bcwf.bc.ca.

The BCWF is a province-wide voluntary conservation organization representing over 35,000 British Columbian members whose aims are to protect, enhance and promote the wise use of the environment for the benefit of present and future generations.

The B.C. Wildlife Federation was incorporated under the B.C. Societies Act in 1951 and it became a registered charity in 1969. The Federation is British Columbia's largest and oldest conservation organization.