



**Release Date:** January 20, 2015

## **Alberta Peace River Dam Project Cancelled by TransAlta**

On January 16, TransAlta Corporation withdrew its application to the Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) for a 9 year extension of the approved construction date of its Dunvegan Hydroelectric Project, citing substantial information requests from stakeholders, a potentially long and costly hearing process, and unfavourable project economics. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) welcomes the withdrawal of the 100 MW hydro power project as positive news for local residents and the Peace's aquatic and river valley ecosystem.

"The end of the Dunvegan Project in the nationally significant Peace River Valley ecosystem is great news for important fish and wildlife populations that would be harmed by another instream flow barrier and associated infrastructure, adding to BC dams' considerable impacts," says Carolyn Campbell, AWA conservation specialist. "Alberta can transition to green energy without the significant damage to our vital river ecology that in-stream hydro brings."

TransAlta had sought to extend its approved construction date deadline from May 2014 to May 2023 without completing geotechnical, transportation and environmental studies that were supposed to fill information gaps as a condition of 2009 approvals. The 100 MW hydro project would have placed a spillway across the Peace River just upstream of Alberta's historic Dunvegan Bridge, to raise the River's level by 6.6 meters and create a headpond of 26 kilometers. TransAlta will now have to re-apply for project approval with fully updated studies if project economics improve.

Concerned Residents for Ongoing Service at Shaftesbury (CROSS), a citizen's group composed of local residents, was the only concerned stakeholder that qualified for standing to trigger a hearing, under Alberta's restrictive 'directly and adversely affected' rules for standing in an industrial development application. Hearings hold proponents accountable for important project impact studies. Like local citizens groups that are sometimes given standing, the crucial role played by 'genuine public interest' environmental groups such as AWA in development decisions should also be recognized by reforming standing rules to allow their concerns to trigger a hearing.

**For more information:**

Carolyn Campbell, Alberta Wilderness Association, (403) 283-2025

