



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

December 21st, 2010

Water licence change threatens Bow River *Approval would grant irrigation district power to assign industrial water rights*

CALGARY — Ecojustice is appealing recent amendments to the Eastern Irrigation District (EID) water licence that would give the District power to function as a water broker and supplier without accountability to the environmental health of the region's water quality and ecosystems.

Ecojustice filed the appeals with the Alberta Environmental Appeals Board on behalf of Water Matters, the Alberta Wilderness Association, Trout Unlimited Canada and three individuals.

“The EID water licence was issued for irrigation purposes, not industrial and commercial activity,” said Ecojustice staff lawyer Barry Robinson. “By allowing the Irrigation District to supply water to new developments, Alberta Environment has circumvented their own regulations that closed the Bow River basin to new water licences back in 2007.”

The Eastern Irrigation District applied in March to amend their existing licence to allow the District to supply water to new municipal, agricultural, commercial and industrial users within the District. Previously, the District was limited to supplying water for irrigation purposes only. Alberta Environment approved the amendment in mid-November despite opposition from environmental groups, First Nations, the Town of Cochrane and concerned landowners.

“The intent of the basin closure was to protect the aquatic environment of the Bow River, which is already degraded downstream of Calgary from existing uses”, said Carolyn Campbell, Conservation Specialist with the Alberta Wilderness Association. “This amendment allows the Irrigation District to supply water to whomever it wishes without any further environmental review.”

The groups also argue that the amendment is an attempt to avoid the holdback of 10 percent of the water for conservation purposes that is required when a water licence is transferred. By avoiding a water licence transfer, the Irrigation District also avoids having to obtain the consent of the irrigators in the District to supply water to other users.

Alberta Environment is currently considering similar applications by the Western Irrigation District and the Bow River Irrigation District.

“Alberta Environment should put all of these applications on hold until the Environmental Appeals Board has an opportunity to deal with this matter” said Robinson.

For more information, please visit: ecojustice.ca



-30-

Contacts:

Barry Robinson, staff lawyer | Ecojustice
403-705-0202

Carolyn Campbell, conservation specialist | Alberta Wilderness Association
403-283-2025

Joe Obad, associate director | Water Matters
403-585-5826

Jeff Surtees, chief executive officer | Trout Unlimited Canada
403-221-8360

For other inquiries, please contact:

Kimberly Shearon, communications associate | Ecojustice
604-685-5618 x242