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Alberta Steps Up Fracking-Caused Earthquake Oversight

On February 19, the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) ordered oil and gas operators in west central Alberta to stop operations if their fracking or wastewater disposal activities cause earthquakes of magnitude 4 or greater, as was recorded twice in January 2015. AER also increased requirements for companies' earthquake monitoring and response plans. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) welcomes this move to better manage some of the risks that intensive fracking activity poses to Alberta's foothills.

"AWA welcomes AER's enhanced requirements for operators to 'reduce or eliminate' seismic events, and to cease operations if noticeable earthquakes are triggered in this region," says Carolyn Campbell, AWA conservation specialist. "We remain concerned about cumulative effects of smaller earthquakes to pipeline and wellbore integrity, and look forward to transparent reporting on these seismic events and risks."

In its February 5 letter to Premier Prentice and AER's CEO Jim Ellis, AWA noted that unmonitored earthquake risk in the region could damage infrastructure and compromise pipeline and wellbore integrity, putting people, water resources and wildlife at risk.

AWA also asks the Alberta government to address remaining significant environmental risks from fracking activities in this region, including unsustainable fresh water usage, and excessive land disturbance in endangered caribou ranges. Alberta's first range plans under the federal woodland caribou recovery strategy are expected soon for two caribou ranges in this region that are the site of a highly controversial wolf cull.

For more information:

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