



West Kootenay EcoSociety

Activating people through leadership and education

Position Statement on Run-of-River Independent Power Projects

Climate change is a complex issue that challenges the world to radically transform how it perceives, produces and uses energy. Aggressive energy conservation, efficiency upgrades, and strengthening ecosystem resiliency must be made the highest priorities for responding to climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). The West Kootenay EcoSociety (WKES) supports the development of renewable energy technologies provided they come on-line to replace fossil fuels and are planned to maintain ecological integrity and provide local social benefits.

The WKES is critical of the BC 2010 Clean Energy Act (CEA) because it endorses the development of run-of-river (RoR) Independent Power Projects (IPPs) without suitable consideration of their potential negative environmental, social, and economic impacts. Major projects are being solicited and approved that may damage the adaptive capacity of the socioeconomic and environmental systems we will be depending upon as climate change deepens. The WKES opposes how RoR IPPs are being developed in BC and makes the following recommendations:

1) Comprehensive Provincial Energy Strategy

A comprehensive, long-term, provincial energy strategy must be developed prior to the approval of any RoR IPPs, and other energy projects in BC. Local governments, First Nations, non-governmental organisations and the general public should be active participants in developing and endorsing this strategy. The strategy should include development of a provincial sustainable energy plan that includes regional level assessments of energy requirements, energy conservation opportunities, energy development options, and an overview of the potential positive and negative social, economic and environmental impacts associated with the options identified. The Comprehensive Provincial Energy Strategy should prioritize Smart Planning¹, aggressive conservation, efficiency, and transitioning away from fossil fuels. When considering new development to meet energy needs, appropriate development sites should be determined based on ecosystem analysis and cumulative effects assessment. Maximum thresholds should be set for environmental impacts in defined development areas.

2) Environmentally Appropriate

All RoR developments must ensure the maintenance of the ecological integrity of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. Construction of transmission lines, roads, dams, headponds and pipelines should not increase risks to rare and endangered species and habitats.

All energy projects must undergo an open and transparent environmental assessment process appropriate to the scale

of the project, level of potential impacts and the sensitivity of values potentially impacted. The assessment must include a thorough analysis of each project's potential contributions towards cumulative impacts at the appropriate scales.

3) First Nations

First Nations' rights and title must be respected. No energy project should be allowed to proceed without appropriate consultation with the First Nation's government of the territory in which the project is proposed.

4) Public Ownership

Energy production and generation should be publicly owned in order to ensure that profits and other benefits remain in the local communities that will bear the majority of the potential impacts. A first right of refusal should be offered to local governments and communities and/or local First Nations.

5) Limited Energy Export Market

Mitigating climate change is a global responsibility – one that BC can contribute to by reducing GHGs and exporting surplus renewable energy. Priority for exports should be given to importing jurisdictions that are actively reducing their dependence on fossil fuels. BC should place upper limits on the amount of energy that can be exported to ensure its own self-sufficiency and the resilience and integrity of its ecosystems.

¹ Smart Planning is a process for envisioning and planning for the long-term well being of communities. It emphasizes long-term thinking; broad scope; integration; collaboration; public engagement and education; implementation; monitoring and evaluation. Description taken from Smart Planning for Communities Initiative, Intergovernmental Relations and Planning, Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development.