



West Kootenay EcoSociety

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Province Stops the Clock On Controversial Private Power Project

Nelson, British Columbia – The proposed Glacier/Howser private power project has hit a major environmental snag and is again floundering over fish. In a surprising move, the provincial Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) stopped the clock on the review of the controversial private power project due to impacts on fish and fish habitat noting these posed a “significant challenge” for the proposed project.

“This is a significant step for the Environmental Assessment Office. It shows that AXOR hasn’t done their homework and there are such serious risks to the environment that the government had to stop the clock. It is a step in the right direction,” says Lee-Ann Unger, West Kootenay EcoSociety. “However, the fact that the EAO cannot reject the project, regardless of its environmental impact, clearly illustrates problems with the process.”

The EAO suspended the environmental review of the 100MW Glacier/Howser project half way into the 180day assessment process. They are requiring AXOR, the project’s proponent, to gather additional information on fish and fish habitat impacts before they complete the process. The review would be resumed if and when AXOR provides this information. The timeline for the suspension has not been confirmed. Surprisingly, there is no legislation in place to provide the EAO with the ability to reject a project regardless of its environmental impact.

Environmental assessments are designed to assess project components, work with proponents to mitigate project impacts and to make recommendations to the Minister of Environment and Minister of Energy, Mines & Petroleum Resources. The Ministers make the final decision on whether a project is to be approved.

“In simple terms this project should not go ahead, not now, and not in the future. It should be dead in the water. Its construction would come at too high an environmental cost,” Unger states. “AXOR has had ample time to collect information for the assessment. More time is not going to make this project environmentally sound. It’s time for AXOR to pack up its environmentally irresponsible plans for Glacier and Howser creeks and move them out.”

This project, the largest of its kind proposed for the Kootenays, has been dogged by controversy due to the negative impact it would have on important bull trout populations, a number of threatened and endangered species including grizzly bears, and plans to

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permanently divert water from four creeks.

The EAO suspension comes on the heels of a series of events including more than 1,100 people flooding a government public meeting on the project in Kaslo, exceeding the town's population; the BC government receiving more than a thousand public submissions on the project, with more than 90% of these expressing opposition to it; and a joint submission made to the EAO by the Ktunaxa Nation Council, Okanagan Nation Alliance and Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), which deemed the project's potential impacts to fish and fish habitat unacceptable.