

Natural Resources Conservation Board News Release

Highwood Storage and Diversion Plan Joint Review Panel Issues Progress Report

Edmonton, June 19, 2000 -- The Highwood Storage and Diversion Plan Joint Review Panel today issued its report on the work being undertaken by Alberta Infrastructure, the proponent, on the proposed Highwood Storage and Diversion Plan. The Panel's report addresses Alberta Infrastructure's request for an extension to meet the requirements of NRCB Board Order 9601-1 and the public comments brought forward at a meeting held on April 19, 2000 in High River.

In its report, the Panel accepts the commitment of Alberta Environment to complete Phase I of the Highwood River Basin Management Plan by March 2002. The Panel also understands that the completion of this work will include Alberta Infrastructure satisfying the requirements outlined in the NRCB Board Order 9601-1. Therefore, the Panel has granted a time extension until March 2002 to Alberta Infrastructure to meet their outstanding requirements.

In its report, the Panel agreed that it would accept a more direct role in the consultation process. As a result, the panel intends to hold additional public meetings prior to the public hearing. The next meeting is scheduled for the early part of November 2000.

The Panel was established jointly under the Alberta Natural Resources Conservation Board Act and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act on March 22, 2000. The Panel's mandate is to examine the environmental, social and economic effects of developing offstream water storage in the Highwood River basin and proposed changes to the diversion plan for the Highwood River.

A previous joint review process originally considered the issues of offstream storage and the diversion plan. However, the previous panel concluded in its report of June 1998 that there was insufficient information to consider these issues adequately and Alberta Infrastructure was asked to carry out additional studies, as set out in NRCB Board Order 9601-1.

Copies of the report are available from the NRCB, 4th Floor, Sterling Place, 9940 -106 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2N2, or by telephoning (780) 422-1977.

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The Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) provides a fair, open and impartial forum for Albertans to take part in the review of natural resource development projects such as forestry, recreational, water management and tourism projects.

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (Agency) is a federal agency reporting to the Minister of the Environment. Its mission is to provide Canadians with high-quality environmental assessments that contribute to informed decision-making in support of sustainable development. Environmental assessment is a planning tool used to identify the possible adverse effects of development projects on the environment.

Information can be found on the NRCB's web site at www.nrcb.gov.ab.ca or on the Agency's web site at www.ceaa.gc.ca.

For more information, please contact:

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Comments regarding presentation should be forwarded to WebEditor@gov.ab.ca

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