



Press Release

Toxic water, empty promises:
Province breaks promise, greenlights dumping toxic wastewater in British Columbia

2007-11-01 Community groups across the province concerned with the provincial government's reckless promotion of Coalbed Methane (CBM) were shocked and angered by a recent decision by the Government to allow continued dumping of toxic waste water from CBM wells into the Elk River, near Fernie, BC.

This October, Storm Cat Energy Corporation announced plans to ramp up their CBM pilot operations in the Elk River watershed to commercial production in 2008. Existing Storm Cat CBM wells are currently discharging toxic waste water directly into Britt Creek, a tributary of the Elk River. There is critical trout spawning habitat at the confluence of these two water bodies.

The commercial production plan calls for the drilling of seven additional wells next year, construction of a gas cleaning/compression facility, and installation of a sales pipeline to Terasen Gas' existing pipeline. Storm Cat's plans represent the first attempt in B.C. to take a CBM operation to commercial production likely resulting in hundreds of wells being drilled across their 30,00ha lease. All of these wells will be grandfathered or exempted from a requirement to reinject waste water.

"What's the purpose of the phased approval procedure, if the entire project is approved up front?" said Ted Ralfe, spokesperson for Citizens Concerned about Coalbed Methane - Elk Valley. "Allowing Storm Cat to move to commercial production and continue to dump the polluted water they pump out of underground coal seams is in direct contradiction of the 2007 BC Energy Plan." The Energy Plan clearly states, 'Companies will not be allowed to surface discharge produced water.'

"This sets an incredibly bad precedent for this industry in our province. What kind of watering down and exemptions to regulations can we expect here on Vancouver Island and elsewhere in B.C.?" said Tom Easton, with Citizens Concerned About Coalbed Methane - Vancouver Island.

"This broken promise does little to build trust between the government and communities around coalbed methane development," said Taylor Bachrach with Citizens Concerned About Coalbed Methane - Bulkley Valley. "It certainly calls into question the government's other Energy Plan commitments."

An independent review commissioned by the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources of the Storm Cat wastewater data concluded that the treated discharge water from Storm Cat CBM pilot wells is high in heavy metals and has proven fatal to trout in toxicity tests. According to the report by Meridian Environmental Inc., "The trout bioassay tests on water samples from the west pilot consistently resulted in 100%

mortality rates between 48 and 96 hours of testing." The mortality was attributed to high ammonium levels, which pose a threat to the entire food web of the receiving watershed.

"The government seems to be making it up as they go along in order to get someone, anyone to take CBM to commercial production. This is exactly the opposite to what the Government has repeatedly promised, and the BC Energy Plan clearly states; namely, "Best coalbed gas practices in North America", said Ralfe.

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