



wildsight

For Immediate Release

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Province-wide “call” for B.C. rivers set for March 26

Wildsight asks people concerned about private power projects to pick up the phone; hopes that 10,000 Voices will be heard by Campbell and local MLAs

KIMBERLEY: On **Thursday, March 26**, thousands of British Columbians will be standing up for B.C.’s rivers in the *10,000 Voices for BC Rivers* campaign. On that day, citizens from around the province will phone and e-mail Premier Campbell and their local MLAs to **ask for a moratorium** on the privatization of rivers for private power projects.

“10,000 Voices is in response to the hundreds of water license applications submitted to develop rivers in B.C. for private river hydro projects,” said Dave Quinn, Wildsight’s Purcell program manager. It is in the Purcells that many of the license applications are pending. Each license application represents one river or creek that will be “tapped” for privately-operated, for-profit hydro power plants.

“It’s simple. We will ask the Campbell government to put a moratorium on private power projects on B.C.’s rivers until a system is in place that ensures three things,” Quinn said.

“One: any river power project is *regionally supported*. Two, each river power project is *environmentally appropriate*. Three, all river power projects are *publicly owned*.”

“I think citizens of B.C. support green energy initiatives,” Quinn said. “But we need to be clear about what ‘green’ energy really is. To divert large volumes of water from major river systems, to build transmission lines and roads through pristine valleys and the habitat of endangered and threatened species is not a ‘green’ energy solution, and in fact could have terrible consequences.

“With hundreds of kilometers of productive and diverse forestlands under reservoirs in the Kootenays already, we need to be careful how much hydro impact we add to our ecosystems,” Quinn said. “Under the current process, there is no opportunity for local input. A two-year moratorium on new Independent Power Proposals would be a first step in protecting the rights of British Columbians and protecting the wilderness values important to us all.”

Quinn said that the B.C. government’s recent focus on private power has resulted in a chaotic situation where cumulative environmental impacts are ignored, regional planning is non-existent and energy security is jeopardized.

“Right now, independent power projects are creating a lose-lose situation,” Quinn said, “for both the natural rivers of B.C. and for the people of B.C. The B.C. government’s 2002 energy plan created a gold-rush mentality — companies have applied for water licenses to almost 600 creeks and rivers throughout B.C., including over 75 in the Columbia Basin alone.”

These projects involve significant diversions of water from rivers and creeks and construction of dams, powerhouses and many kilometres of roads and transmission lines, often through pristine and otherwise protected wilderness areas.

Quinn urged people to call Premier Campbell and their MLAs at the B.C. Legislature in Victoria, which is in session this week. “To find your MLA’s contact info, visit www.leg.bc.ca”

Premier Gordon Campbell: **250.387.1715.**

Bill Bennett (Kootenay East): **250-953-4246.**

Norm MacDonald (Columbia River/Revelstoke): **250-387-3655.**

The *10,000 Voices for BC’s Rivers* campaign was launched by the Western Canada Wilderness Committee and is supported by Wildsight, the West Kootenay EcoSociety and many other groups in B.C.

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(For more MLA contacts, please see below.)

About Wildsight

Wildsight works locally, regionally and globally to protect biodiversity and encourage sustainable communities in Canada's Columbia and Southern Rocky Mountain region. This area is internationally recognized as a keystone to conservation in western North America. For more information, please visit www.wildsight.ca.

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MLA Finder: <http://leg.bc.ca/MLA/3-1-1.htm> • **Elections BC:** 1-800-661-8683.