



NEWS RELEASE

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June 3, 2009

Controversial Glacier/Howser Private Hydro Project Announces Open Houses. Local Governments & Organizations Ignored.

Nelson, British Columbia – Details of the public meetings for the highly controversial Glacier/Howser private hydro project were released late yesterday and local input has been ignored. Various organizations and local governments within the West Kootenay region requested that a public meeting be held in Nelson due to its centrality and accessibility within the region. According to the EAO website, meetings will only be held in the rural communities of Kaslo, Meadow Creek and Invermere and Nelson was left off the list.

“They are trying to avoid public input which is why they are avoiding Nelson. The proponent and EAO’s lack of willingness to host a public meeting in the most central community in the West Kootenay is outrageous,” says Unger. “The areas that would be impacted by the Glacier/Howser private hydro project are important ecologically and for tourism and recreation. To ignore requests from local governments and organizations representing thousands of people within our region speaks to a lack of democracy in the public input process around the Glacier/Howser project.”

This controversial power project is the largest run-of-river project proposed in the Kootenays and has generated considerable public concern due to its potential negative ecological impacts on an important aquatic habitat and wilderness areas. It is also a popular tourism and recreation destination. Requests and letters asking that a public meeting on the Glacier/Howser project also be held in Nelson were sent to the provincial Environmental Assessment Office and AXOR Inc from the West Kootenay EcoSociety, Wildsight, the regional BC Wildlife Federation, an organization representing 13 groups in the West Kootenay, the West Kootenay Naturalists, Mayor of the City of Trail, Rossland City Council, Nelson City Council and some directors from the Regional District of the Central Kootenay.

AXOR Inc, under the subsidiary Purcell Green Power, resubmitted their application for the Glacier/Howser private hydro project on May 6th after it was rejected last year by the EAO. The EAO accepted the revised application late last week and is now moving into the final public input period for the project.

Details from the Glacier/Howser private hydro project description show that it includes the construction of 92kms of new power lines stretching from the West to the East Kootenay. These power lines would cut through areas of old growth forest, old growth management areas off limits to logging companies and important grizzly bear habitat.

It also includes the damming and diverting of water from 5 creeks – Glacier, Howser, Berhman, Suck, Birnam – into a combined 16 km of tunnels large enough to drive a dump truck through. Unlike most other projects, the water diverted would never return to the original creeks, leaving up to 12km of both streams with dramatically reduced water flow. There are concerns about the negative impact this would have on important aquatic habitat including spawning ground for blue-listed bull trout.

“The proposed Glacier/Howser hydro project poses an unacceptable threat to Glacier and Howser creeks and surrounding wilderness areas including critical grizzly bear habitat,” said Lee-Ann Unger of the West Kootenay EcoSociety. “This is an ecologically significant area and the potential environmental impacts of this project are unacceptable.”

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