



SIMPCW FIRST NATION

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SimpCW First Nation Challenges Holmes River Hydro Project

Chief Rita Matthew of the Simpcw First Nation today questioned why the Holmes River hydro project in the McBride area has been allowed to avoid the requirement of a full environmental review, given that the 76 megawatt project is 26 megawatts over the 50 megawatt threshold that should trigger an environmental review under the Environmental Assessment Act. Citing a legal challenge to the Holmes River hydro project in the BC Supreme Court by the David Suzuki Foundation and Watershed Watch, Chief Matthew has sent a letter to Hon. Rich Coleman, Minister of Energy, pointing out that 10 small permits in the Holmes River watershed are all closely tied into one large project that should have been subjected to a full environmental review under Section 5 of the Environmental Assessment Act.

Chief Matthew also stated that the BC government has so far failed to meet 3 key legal requirements for permitting the Holmes River project:

- ‡ Meaningful consultation with Simpcw First Nation about infringement by the project on aboriginal title and rights;
- ‡ Good faith negotiations with Simpcw First Nation about conditions that would have to be met in order for the project to receive a permit;
- ‡ Fair compensation for infringement by the project of Simpcw aboriginal title and rights.

In her letter to Rich Coleman she said: “We are especially concerned about the potential cumulative impacts of this project on the Holmes River watershed, which is located in Simpcw First Nation traditional territory (see attached map). In particular, we are aware of the potential damage this project could do to local populations of grizzlies, ungulates, salmon, berries, and fresh water fish that are part of the traditional resource base of our people. To date, we have not seen a detailed and comprehensive report on the potential cumulative project impacts on these resources, nor have we seen a plan of proposed mitigation measures the proponents of the project could deploy to offset environmental damage resulting from the project.”

Chief Matthew also pointed out that “although my people are in favour in principle of sustainable economic development and clean energy, Simpcw First Nation will oppose both the Holmes Hydro project and the Holmes River transmission line until and unless our aboriginal interests in the project area have been properly accommodated by British Columbia and the proponent.” She added that, if the project were to proceed, any future damage or risk to Simpcw traditional resources must be offset by appropriate mitigation measures and appropriate economic compensation to Simpcw First Nation, and that Simpcw First Nation is considering a legal challenge to the project.

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Simpcwulucw (Simpcw Traditional Territory)

