

World Wildlife Fund Report Supports NWT Water Stewardship Strategy

Yellowknife, October 19, 2009 – A new report on Canadian rivers at risk supports Northwest Territories (NWT) work to develop a NWT Water Stewardship Strategy.

The report, Canada's Rivers at Risk, was produced by World Wildlife Fund – Canada (WWF-Canada) to assess the status of environmental flow in 10 Canadian rivers and provide a forecast of likely future conditions. The concept of environmental flow provides the scientific foundation for defining how much water a river and the watersheds it supports needs to remain healthy and productive.

“The Rivers at Risk report echoes some of the same concerns that are driving the development of an NWT Water Stewardship Strategy,” said Michael J. Miltenberger, Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. “It notes the work being done by our Government, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Aboriginal governments to protect the waters of the NWT from these threats, many which lie outside of the NWT.”

The Athabasca River is also included in the Rivers at Risk Report. The report notes rapidly increasing water demand for oil sands mining poses a serious threat to environmental flows in the lower Athabasca. It suggests an ecosystem-based flow would strengthen a water management framework to regulate withdrawals from the river by the oil sands industry.

“An ecosystem-based approach to integrated watershed management is a key component of the draft NWT Water Stewardship Strategy,” added Miltenberger. “The Strategy will guide all decisions about water resource stewardship in the NWT and be a strong basis for negotiations of bilateral agreements with neighbouring jurisdictions such as Alberta and British Columbia.”

The draft NWT Water Stewardship Strategy is scheduled for release in early November.

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