



PROTECT THE PEACE!



Photo above: Autumn comes to the Peace River Valley (Graham Osbourne).
 Photo above left: Treaty 8 First Nations and allies at the Paddle to the Premier event in Victoria (WC files).

STOP THE SITE C DAM



Tria Donaldson
 Pacific Coast
 Campaigner,
 Wilderness Committee

Like many people who have travelled to the Peace River Valley, my life has been forever touched by its incredible beauty, and the strength and determination of the people who have been fighting to protect it for over thirty years.

The Peace River Valley, located outside of Fort St. John in northeast BC, is at the heart of a growing storm of controversy. The BC government is attempting to move forward with the \$8 billion Site C Dam, a mega-project that would flood 80 kilometres of forests, farms and homes¹ – and all of this destruction is simply to generate electricity that the province doesn't even need.

Additional land would likely be lost to landslides, as the banks of the reservoir erode over time. This valley has already been severely impacted by the development of two previous dams, as well as from unchecked natural gas development and mining projects.

Visiting this valley – tasting food grown in its soil, and smelling the earthy aroma of moose hide hunted on its banks and cured by First Nations elders – has driven home for me just how senseless this project is.

What we stand to lose if Site C goes ahead cannot be measured in dollars and megawatt hours alone.

You cannot put a price tag on the rich fertile soil, and the right to pass down your family farm to your children. You cannot put a price tag on the sun-warmed slopes

and protected island chains that provide both winter feed and sheltered birthing habitat for moose, elk and deer. And there is no price tag for the thousand-plus year history that is etched into the land – the First Nations burial grounds and sacred sites, the pioneer homesteads, the family homes – which will be forever submerged

“Hydro likes to talk like it's [Site C] a done deal, but it's not. My grandfather fought this the first time it was announced in 1977-78 and I know it's not a for sure thing—it's been cancelled twice before.”

–Arelene Boon,
 Third Generation Valley farmer⁴

under water if Site C is allowed to flood this precious valley.

BC Hydro claims Site C is the only way forward for the province, but it just isn't true. First, Hydro's own reports show we can meet future increases in energy demand with our current energy supply just through conservation.² Second, Hydro's energy forecasting does not include the downstream benefits from the Columbia River Treaty, which stipulates that B.C. receives either money or hydro electricity



Photo: Hundreds paddle the Peace River for annual event (Graham Osbourne).

from the United States in return for our role in their hydroelectric production.³ We currently take these benefits as money, but any time we need the electricity we have a source equivalent to Site C without new environmental destruction. Third, we also have the ability to retrofit our existing dams to maximize peak electrical generation.

This is the third time the government of British Columbia has tried to build the Site C Dam. On both previous occasions, their attempts failed because the project comes at too high of a cost – both in terms of its ecological footprint and its impact on the wallets of British Columbians.

This time, although it is further in the approval process than ever before, we can beat it again. But we need your help. **Please read this report, and support the campaign to Protect the Peace from the costly and destructive Site C Dam.**



Photo: Sheltered islands key for moose habitat (Graham Osbourne).

No Dam Way: 8 Billion Dollars to Destroy a River?

Food for Thought: Site C's Agriculture Impact

There are many alternatives when it comes to producing energy but there's only one way to grow fresh, healthy food – for that, you need farmland. And in northern BC, the farmland in the Peace River Valley is uniquely suited to provide for the region's food security needs, which will only grow as food prices increase due to the impacts of climate change. There are few places so far north where you can grow market vegetables like cantaloupe

melons, sweet corn and cucumbers without a greenhouse. The region has the only Class 1 agricultural land north of Quesnel, which means

“Currently we are self-sufficient in energy. What we have is a problem with our food production. We import 52 per cent of our food. We need to deal with that.”

–Arthur Hadland, Peace River Regional District Area Representative

there are few constraints on what can be grown there.⁵ The rich soils of the valley bottom combined with low elevation slopes and warm air from the Pacific create a growing season that farmers in the Lower Mainland would envy.

The Site C Dam puts this region's food security at risk

because it would flood over 7,000 acres of Class 1 and 2 agricultural land.⁶ It would be the single largest deletion from the Agricultural Land Reserve in the history of the province.⁷



Photo left: Families enjoy the Peace River while standing up for its future (Dave Bell). Above: Taking the fight against Site C to Victoria (J. Lee).

As Long as the River Flows: First Nations and the Site C Dam

The Peace River waters and adjoining lands are a vital resource for the local First Nations and are a part of their historical, social, cultural and spiritual identity.

*For as long as the sun shines, the grass grows, and the river flows.*¹¹ When the Canadian government signed Treaty 8 with the Beaver, Cree, Slavey, Saulteau and Tse'Khene First Nations, it made a promise. The Treaty was a promise that the First Nations people could continue their way of life, including rights to hunting, fishing and trapping. These rights would be violated by the Site C Dam.

Elk, moose, deer and fish all play an important role in the diet of First Nations people in the Valley. The proposed dam would diminish animal populations, restrict access to traditional hunting grounds and threaten fish stocks. At least 78 First Nations heritage sites would be

flooded, including burial grounds and important cultural sites.¹² The downstream impacts on water flow will have an impact on First

“This is the last land we have. Future generations have a right to a landscape that is the same as their ancestors knew it.”

–Treaty 8 First Nations Elder

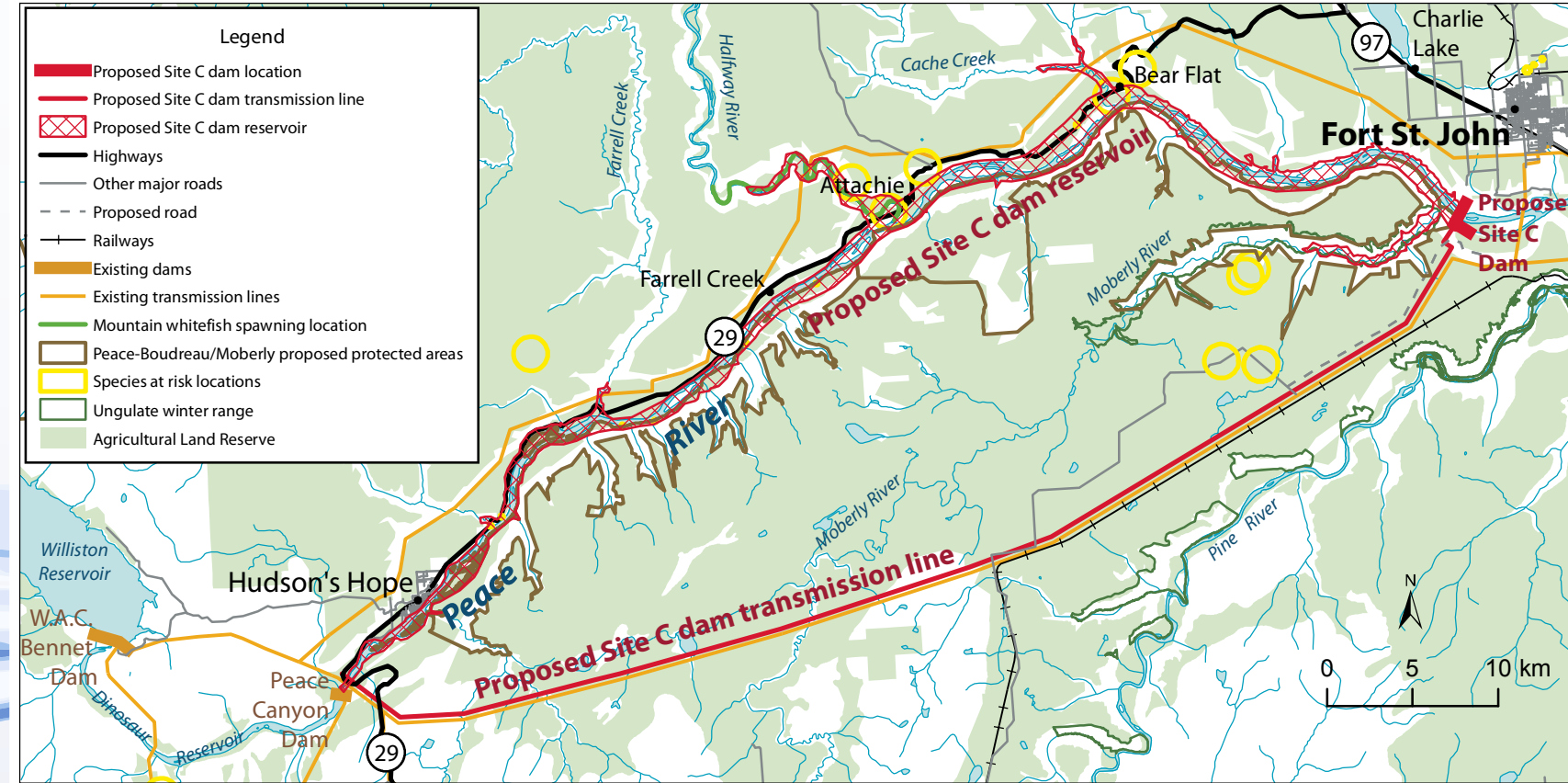
Nations throughout Alberta and the Northwest Territories.

In September 2010, over 33 First Nations signed a joint declaration in opposition to the Site C Dam. Wrapped in birch bark collected by elders from the banks of the Peace, copies of the declaration were sent to leaders of all the major BC provincial political parties.



Photo: Participants in the 2010 Paddle to the Premier head to the Legislature (Tina Schlessler).

Mega Dam, Mega Impacts: What Site C will do to the Peace River Valley



Death by a Thousand Cuts

The Peace River Valley is an oasis surrounded by intense industrial development. With two existing dams, and heavy oil and gas activity, the region's ecosystems are feeling the pressure of decades of runaway development.

The upper Peace River is constrained by BC Hydro's W.A.C. Bennett and Peace Canyon dams. These dams, which flooded productive land to create one of the largest artificial reservoirs in the world, provide power for most of the province.

The two existing dams have had far reaching impacts within the Athabasca and Mackenzie deltas; low water levels downstream have resulted in negative impacts on sensitive wetlands which have significantly altered the livelihoods of First Nations communities in Alberta and the Northwest Territories. The first two dams also blocked migratory corridors that were essential for the region's once plentiful and now threatened

caribou herds.

In addition to the giant reservoirs, the land is dotted with oil and gas wells, and crisscrossed by natural gas pipelines. According to the Oil and Gas Commission website, since 1950 the number of active wells has increased from 17 to over 27,000.⁸ Pipeline spills and abandoned waste sites are

“The Peace Valley is one of the last remaining pristine areas, and they are going to flood it. Because the rest of our territory has been so heavily impacted by oil and gas, by mining, by forestry, we are running out of places to go. We can't even drink the water out on our traditional territory anymore because of the hydrocarbons, because of the contaminated sites that are left behind.”

–Tribal Chief Liz Logan, Treaty 8 First Nations

an unavoidable consequence of activity in the oil and gas sector. In the Treaty 8 First Nations' territory there are over 1,400 documented contaminated sites where toxic pollutants have soaked into the

soil.⁹ Ungulates, like moose and deer, are drawn to the salty tasting toxic ponds and ingest the polluted water, causing a lasting impact on the food chain.¹⁰

Clearcut logging, strip mining and electricity transmission lines are already having an impact on the Peace ecosystems.

In the midst of all of this devastation, the Peace River Valley stands as a sanctuary for species impacted by habitat fragmentation. If Site C is built it may be the last straw for many of the species that call this region home.



Photo: The constant erosion around Williston Reservoir puts homes at risk (Diane Culling).



Your Money, Their Pocket

In the last year the projected cost of the Site C Dam has sky rocketed from \$6 billion to nearly \$8 billion.¹³ This is a cost that will be borne out directly by ratepayers and taxpayers for energy we don't actually need. This huge public spending project comes at a time when Hydro is toying with a 33 percent rate increase for residential energy users.

BC Hydro's own reports show we don't need the energy.¹⁴ So who does and why are they pushing to build this project?

BC Energy Minister Rich Coleman has stated that Site C will provide cheap energy to power a new wave of growth in the Horn River and Montney shale gas fields.¹⁵

However, shale gas is one of the most destructive forms of resource extraction because of the volume of

freshwater used in a process known as hydraulic fracturing or "fracking". In the Peace region, water used for fracking is piped directly out of the Williston Reservoir into trucks heading for shale gas fields outside of Hudson's Hope.¹⁶ Water usage for fracking also takes water

“British Columbians don't need this power. It's the natural gas and coal industries that need this power. How is it clean to dam rivers to produce electricity to pump gas and dig coal out of the ground?”

–Roland Wilson, Chief of the West Moberly First Nations

away from other uses such as generating power through existing dams.

Coleman also stated that the power would be used to bring on six

new mines along the proposed Highway 37 transmission line.¹⁷ This project could open the pristine Sacred Headwaters up for destructive mining development, fueled by high commodity prices and subsidized hydro energy from the Site C Dam.

There is another disturbing piece of the Site C puzzle. The BC government said in the 2010 Speech from the Throne that power from Site C would be used to back-up and firm intermittent private power from so-called "run of river" projects.¹⁸ Hundreds of rivers throughout BC have been staked by private power developers eager for an easy buck on the back of the provincial coffers and citizens.

Far from an investment in the future energy needs of B.C. families, Site C is an \$8-billion taxpayer subsidy to provide cheap energy to the fossil fuel industry while propping up the private hydropower industry that threatens hundreds of rivers.



Photos above: Hundreds of people attended protests in 2010 to Protect the Peace. These shots reflect the diversity of the campaign (WC files, janinebandcroft.ca).

Where the Wild Things Are

The Peace River Valley is a flourishing and productive ecosystem. Its unique micro climate is home to species like the prickly pear cactus, which you might not think could flourish that far north. The valley is home to over 20 threatened species, including grizzly bear, bull trout and countless endangered bird species.¹⁹

The Peace region is also one of the most important wildlife corridors in the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative – a continent wide connected wilderness area.²⁰ This low-lying valley is key to facilitating movement between the northern and southern Rocky Mountains for many wildlife species. Much of this linkage is already severed

by the reservoirs created by the W.A.C. Bennett and Peace Canyon dams. The sheltered islands provide secure birthing habitat for ungulates like moose, mule deer and elk.

Site C would forever alter critical habitat and cut off migratory routes. The impact on biodiversity would be devastating.

“Everyone agrees that wildlife and fish need to move between their preferred habitats. The Site C reservoir will not only cut some animals off from high quality areas, it will also prevent them from moving northward to adapt to climate change.”

–Wendy Francis, Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative



Photo left: **Prickly Pear Cactus at home in Interior BC** (Eryne Croquet). Photo above: **The water levels would submerge productive farmland** (Larry Peterson).

We Can Stop This Dam!

The Site C Dam proposal has been around for 30 years. Twice before, concerned citizens have killed this project because BC Hydro has not been able to demonstrate the need for the power and show that Site C is the only viable alternative. Twice before it has been stopped because people like you have stood

with the people of the Peace River Valley to say no.

We can and must stop this expensive and unnecessary dam from being brought back from the dead. The costs of the Site C Dam – both to the people and to the ecosystems of this province – are just too high. With your help, we can stop this dam.

TAKE ACTION

Please write Premier Clark and Prime Minister Harper today to ask them to:

- Protect the Peace and Say ‘No’ to the Site C Dam once and for all. We don’t need another costly, destructive and unnecessary hydroelectric dam.

► Premier Christy Clark

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Photo: **Victoria Paddle to the Premier** (WC files).

Proper Oversight Needed

Once upon a time, decisions made in this province about energy supply and demand were scrutinized by an independent third party called the BC Utility Commission (BCUC). The mandate of this body was to review all new energy policies and projects to ensure that they were in the best interests of the people of this province.²¹

It was the BCUC that turned down Site C during previous pushes from government to build the dam because Hydro could not illustrate that all alternatives had

been explored and that the energy would be needed.

In 2010, former BC premier Gordon Campbell backhandedly removed Site C from BCUC’s oversight.²² In doing so, he also removed the protection of public and ratepayer interests. Without oversight from BCUC, the BC government is blindly pushing forward the expensive Site C hydro dam proposal.

The BC government must reinstate BCUC’s jurisdiction over the highly controversial Site C Dam proposal which is fast turning into a multi-billion dollar boondoggle.

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