

DIRECTIVE 2012-01

November 14, 2012



UPDATE - Suspension of Short-Term Water Use in Northeast B.C.

To: Industry Clients

Effective Date: Immediately

The BC Oil and Gas Commission (Commission) issued [Directive 2012-01](#) on Aug. 2 suspending short-term water withdrawals in northeast B.C. due to drought conditions. This is an update to that Directive.

Requirement:

The suspension is ended for all rivers and lakes in the Montney Trend (Peace River and inflow streams). The suspension is maintained for the Horn River Basin and Cordova Embayment areas (Fort Nelson and Liard River drainages), with the following exceptions:

- Withdrawal of water stored in dugouts is not suspended.
- Withdrawal under Basin Section 8 Approvals is not suspended (small volumes, dispersed sources, for such things as geophysical exploration, freezing of winter road crossings, etc.)
- Withdrawal of water from the following sources is not suspended:
 - o Sikanni Chief River and tributaries
 - o Muskwa River and tributaries
 - o Fort Nelson River mainstem
 - o Fontas River mainstem
 - o Liard River and tributaries, except Capot Blanc River

Given the local variability, the Commission recognizes there are other river and lake sources in the Horn River Basin and Cordova Embayment where conditions have improved sufficiently to allow withdrawals. The Commission will review new applications for short term water use, or requests to use existing approvals, on a site-specific basis.

Operators are requested to do the following to support new applications or to use an existing Section 8 approval in the Horn River Basin, Liard Basin and Cordova Embayment areas (the Fort Nelson and Liard River drainages):

1. Limit the application to water volumes and points of diversion that are realistic to the specific operational needs for the upcoming winter and spring.
2. For new short-term water use applications, use separate applications for water source dugouts and for rivers/lakes. Approvals for water from rivers and lakes require detailed review.
3. For new short-term use water use applications for water from rivers and streams, or request use of existing approvals, provide a discharge measurement at the point(s) of diversion, to provide information on current flow conditions in relation to the volume of water requested. The discharge measurement must be collected to an acceptable hydrometric standard by a qualified individual. Along with the flow measurement, submit the date and location of the measurement, and contact information (name, company and phone number) for the individual conducting the measurement.

**For oil and gas incidents and emergencies, please contact the Commission at:
1-800-663-3456 (24 hours).**

4. For new short-term water use applications for water from lakes, or reactivation of existing approvals, provide information on lake hypsometry:
 - Surface area (hectares)
 - Depth (metres). If lake depth information is not already available (such as from provincial databases or previous surveys), obtain depth measurements at points along two transects representing the long and short lake axes, to determine maximum lake depth.
 - Volume (cubic metres)
5. If the volume of water being accessed from a lake or stream source is small (for example, less than one per cent of current flow), or is for dispersed and small purposes, such as geophysical exploration or winter road freezing, field measurements will not be required. Basin Section 8 approvals for uses such as geophysical exploration or other low-volume and dispersed uses will not require field measurements.

Background:

The BC Oil and Gas Commission works closely with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations to regulate and actively monitor water use by the oil and gas sector in British Columbia. Following a very dry three-month period between July and September, weather patterns changed, bringing rain to portions of the Peace River area in early October and snow throughout northeast B.C. Fort St John recorded 148 millimetres (mm) of precipitation in October, with about two-thirds occurring as snow; Fort Nelson recorded 41 mm of precipitation, mostly as snow. Snowmelt has been occurring in some areas and rivers have been rising gradually. The Commission has reviewed all available hydrometric data from the Water Survey of Canada current to Nov. 5, and has completed a hydrometric survey at some locations in the Horn River Basin to assess flow conditions. Many gauged rivers have risen over the last three to four weeks, but, some areas still remain well below normal for the date. There is variability, particularly in the far northeast (Horn River Basin, Cordova Embayment), where the sustained cold weather has limited stream flow recovery.

Should you have any questions regarding this Directive Update, please contact:

Allan Chapman
Hydrologist, Operations Division
BC Oil and Gas Commission
Allan.Chapman@bcogc.ca
250-419-4435

Approved by:
Roger St. Jean
Deputy Commissioner
Permitting and Authorizations

**For oil and gas incidents and emergencies, please contact the Commission at:
1-800-663-3456 (24 hours).**