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## INFORMATION BULLETIN

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June 9, 2010

Ministry of Environment

### **WATER ACT REGULATORY ACTION INITIATED FOR CHIMNEY LAKES**

VICTORIA – The Ministry of Environment is using authority under the Water Act to make changes to the regulated amounts of diversion and use of water for the Chimney Lakes community in the Cariboo.

The Cariboo region is facing critical water shortages. Due to low winter snowpacks and already emerging drought conditions, water flows in this area are extremely low and there is not enough water for all water licensees. To protect water supplies in the Chimney Creek watershed (including Chimney Lake, Felker Lake and Brunson Lake), the B.C. government is invoking priority rights.

Water rights for licences issued after 1937 are temporarily suspended for the remainder of the irrigation season (Sept. 30, 2010) or until the Ministry of Environment rescinds the order, which the ministry will do if weather conditions change sufficiently. This order applies to domestic water use and other water purposes such as irrigation. It does not apply to groundwater withdrawals from wells.

Under the Water Act, water licences are regulated by the licence priority date, and older licences have priority over newer licences. Priority date of a licence usually reflects the date the application for water rights was received.

Before initiating regulatory action, the ministry requested water licensees in the area to undertake voluntary water conservation measures and informed them that regulatory action may be required in the near future.

Drought conditions can impact communities in many different ways, including reduced water availability for household and business use, potential impacts to fish and other aquatic life and potential impacts to agricultural crops.

For more information on drought, and what the B.C. government is doing to prepare for and respond to drought, go to: [www.env.gov.bc.ca/wsd/public\\_safety/drought\\_info/](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wsd/public_safety/drought_info/).

For more information on what farmers and producers can do to manage their crops and livestock before and during a drought, go to: [www.waterbucket.ca/](http://www.waterbucket.ca/).

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