

Boundary Environmental Alliance releases its Report Card on Area E Regional Director, Bill Baird. Nov 2011

It's an F

BEA works to protect Natural Resources in the Boundary. A primary focus is the Kettle River Watershed and BEA has called (repeatedly) for a Comprehensive Watershed Management Planning Process for the Kettle.

In our full Report Card <http://www.boundaryalliance.org/baird.pdf> we detail some instances where Mr Baird's actions (or the lack of them) on environmental issues, resulted in F's.

Incredibly, many months ago, despite Mr Baird's shortcomings on environmental concerns, the Chair of the Kettle River Watershed Committee was removed and Mr Baird installed as Chair, on the whim? of the Chair of the Regional District Directors. We think it very unlikely that the Kettle River Watershed Committee would have made that same decision. Since then the Kettle River Watershed Committee has not had any meetings. Obviously the RDKB needs to address the arbitrary powers of the Chair of the Regional District Directors and take steps to put the Watershed Planning process back on track.

In addition to the graded examples, Mr Baird's tenure has resulted in numerous complaints BEA has been made aware of throughout Area E:

Lack of responsiveness to many community concerns

Failure to respond to calls

Poor attendance at meetings

There are some who are prepared to overlook these inadequacies as they or their projects have been recipients of funds from Mr Baird. A reminder, these funds are not out of Mr Baird's pocket, they are public funds, taxpayer's funds, and none should be handed out on the whim of any Regional Director.

Some typical instances, in no particular order:

Big White's water license application 3 years ago at the all-candidates meeting, Mr Baird responded to questions as to why there had been no public meeting to discuss Big White's water licence, that he and the RDKB wanted such a meeting, but Ministry of Environment would not agree to attend. It was suggested to Mr Baird that he could arrange a public meeting to discuss the Big White issue and also give an opportunity for the public to provide input to the proposed Kettle River Study terms-of-reference, something Mr Baird had indicated earlier in the meeting, was intended. We proposed that MOE had a duty to be there, but their presence was not essential to that meeting, and if MOE declined

to attend that meeting, the public and RDKB could respond to that as they saw fit.

Mr Baird agreed to set up such a meeting “very soon”. It never happened.

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RIVERWALK 2009. This event was organized by citizens who have worked peacefully to highlight community concerns re the Kettle River, possible uranium mining and Big White’s water application. A couple of days prior to the walk Mr Baird contacted media and others who were to be volunteer entertainers at stopovers, with unsubstantiated and misleading information that Riverwalk participants intended to damage private irrigation equipment. Mr Baird spread this false information without contacting the organizers and subsequently would not reveal where this false claim came from. **Report Card F.**

Private Application to acquire Crown Land in Environmentally Sensitive Area.

When we asked for Mr Baird’s help in fighting an application by a private landowner (ranch) to acquire Crown Land under an “Extensive Agriculture” application we received no help. The proposed purchase was in a largely forested area with significant wildlife values and one of a diminishing number of wildlife corridors. As a number of similar applications had occurred in the RDKB, mostly with inadequate notifications to interested parties, we suggested to Mr Baird that Community Plans or an exercise to determine Environmentally Sensitive Areas could help identify areas in need of protection. Mr Baird indicated that he wouldn’t touch that idea with a 10 foot pole. Such Environmentally Sensitive Area exercises have been carried out in numerous jurisdictions and are invaluable in planning processes.

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Prior to the RDKB initiation of the Watershed Management process, Mr Baird told us that he and the Regional District wanted to do some planning to address potential flooding issues on the Kettle if money became available. There was no indication of any intent to address other watershed issues. We note that Mr Baird has since claimed in the media to have been working on a (Comprehensive) Watershed Management Plan for 5 years. Oh? **Report Card F**

When the RDKB started talking about a Watershed Management Planning Process, we advised Mr Baird that a Senior Professor at UBC would be willing to come to the area to address RDKB and the community on Watershed Planning. (We had first-hand experience re the Professor’s abilities through work in another jurisdiction) Despite the Professor’s record as a world renowned scientist with extensive experience in Water Management issues and a senior member of a UBC Department which teaches Watershed Management Planning, Mr Baird declared no interest in this valuable resource, “We have our own experts” said Baird. Obviously not say we. It is likely that this resource would have had a continuing role in Kettle Watershed Planning. **Report Card F**

When the RDKB did initiate a Watershed Management process, Mr Baird suggested publicly that the planning process should await completion of several studies that might take years to complete. We pointed out at that time to the RDKB and the Ministry of Environment that such an approach was a mistake. We will repeat that advice here: *“Experts in Watershed Management Planning caution that “it is a trap” to avoid planning or acting while waiting for all the studies (there will never be enough) and*

that information can be incorporated into plans and actions as it becomes available, in a well recognized process called Adaptive Management. Many WMP processes take 5 to 6 years to finalize a plan. If the process does not begin until studies are completed, three or who knows how many years away, the whole process could take 10 years or more. **Politicians and bureaucrats might like these extended timelines as it enables them to do nothing to address very current issues, while pointing to the promise of some future process that might.** It is useful to consider that 125 years ago the CPR was built across Canada in less than half that time. A WMP process does not need to scale mountain passes, dig tunnels, build tracks and bridges. A WMP process is mostly talk. It should begin." For more on this see http://www.boundaryalliance.org/pressrelease_openletter_jan2010.pdf Clearly Mr Baird is not following our or expert advice. **Report Card F.**

Complaints from Dr at Big White BEA has no direct information on this issue and offers no opinion however we provide a link to the story. <http://www.mybigwhite.com/local-physican-fined> Go beyond the article to the letters that follow. It appears the good Dr would issue an F.

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