

Peace River Wildlife Stranding Study

Monitoring the impacts of spills on Peace River wildlife and habitat

The Peace Water Use Plan Committee recommended a study to assess wildlife stranding following spillway operations and high flows at Peace Canyon Dam. The objective of the study is to weigh the ecological merit of planned, high flow pulses with the risks to wildlife and habitat following spillway operations.



Questions We Wanted to Answer

1. What are the impacts on ungulates, beavers, riparian birds and western toads and their respective habitats as a result of a spill event?



Study Update

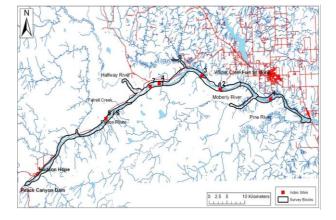
- Ungulate populations and habitat were likely not impacted as a result of the high flow conditions resulting from a spill.
- Of 29 nests checked, three were flooded. Above-average spring runoff also may have caused some nest losses.
- Short-term impacts to beaver from loss of lodges and food caches were observed.
- Anecdotal evidence indicated Western Toad mortality rates were likely not large enough to measure.

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Lessons Learned

- The wildlife impacts from a spill likely mimic naturally occurring flood events that took place prior to WAC Bennett and PNC dam construction.
- This study design looked at many species over a large geographic area with a limited post spill window. It is a broad overview of the wildlife impacts in the study area.



Key Findings and Next Steps

- Wildlife observations along the Peace River following spillway operations in July 2012 indicate that planned spill and flood pulse operations, only minimally impact wildlife stranding and habitat.
- Further work on this study has been suspended in acknowledgement of the ongoing development for the Site C hydroelectric project. Lessons learned will inform future monitoring studies undertaken by BC Hydro.