

An open letter to President George W. Bush

Stop U.S. Pollution of Canada's Waters Now

Dear President Bush,

Just when the United States is moving to tighten the border with Canada, it's about to open the floodgates – literally – in a way that threatens the ecological security of both countries.

It's happening in North Dakota, where the state's Water Commission has a project to send polluted water north into the Red River, through Manitoba into Lake Winnipeg and Hudson Bay in Canada.

In this time of increasing global conflict over water, it is the worst possible time for the United States to signal its disregard of 96 years of successful cooperation with its neighbor to the north.

This scheme to build an emergency outlet from Devils Lake is condemned by the Canadian government, Manitoba, conservation groups on both sides of the border and First Nations. The outlet project is based on scientific misinformation and will violate international law.

The North Dakota Water Commission's \$28-million plan is to pump water out of Devils Lake into the Sheyenne River, using two pumping stations, a 9-mile channel and a 3-mile pipeline. The Sheyenne River flows into the Red, which flows north, which, in turn - well, the story is clear.

So is the problem. The difficulty with Devils Lake, which is about half the size of Utah's Great Salt Lake, is that right now, no one wants this water. It's a saltwater basin in the middle of some of the most important fresh water in the world.

Admittedly, North Dakotans have a problem too, because Devils Lake keeps rising. Its levels usually are modified only by evapora-

tion. Unfortunately, it's not evaporating fast enough, and the lake has risen 25 feet in 10 years, covering farmland and forcing a few hundred people to move.

It's not the first time people have tampered with Devils Lake. In the 1940s, the U.S. government spent millions to drain wetlands there.

Not only has North Dakota skipped the environmental assessment of the emergency outlet, they've neglected to consult Mother Nature. With drought and the return of dustbowl conditions a specter for prairie inhabitants on both sides of the border, the state is proceeding with a 1940s strategy that does not include local options to build water reserves for future use.

When the Devils Lake tap is turned on, the damage will be irreversible - both ecologically and politically. Here are three good reasons why this project should be stopped:

- The emergency outlet is a dangerous project. The necessary scientific work has not been done on the impact of sending this dirty water into Canada. But the fact that North Dakota has spent additional money to relocate the intake for this project shows they are aware that invasive species, disease and pollution will wend their way north.
- The project is unilateral. Objections have been raised by the governments of Canada, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and, through the Great Lakes Commission, representatives of seven states - New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Indiana,

Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois, as well as the Assembly of First Nations. The United States is missing in action on this file.

- The project violates international law. Since 1909, the United States and Canada have been bound by the International Boundary Waters Treaty which governs shared waters. The treaty is clear: It says that neither country will pollute the water they share.

Proceeding with the Devils Lake Emergency Outlet will shatter this record of cooperation.

To his credit, Canada's Prime Minister Paul Martin has raised Canada's concerns about the Devils Lake scheme directly with you. And Manitoba Premier Gary Doer and his water safety minister, Steve Ashton, also have been outspoken in opposing North Dakota's project.

But now it's time to do more.

It's time to ask the International Joint Commission to step in and conduct an independent inquiry. And it's time for an injunction against turning on the tap for the Devils Lake emergency outlet.

It is perverse that citizens should be undefended until the dirty waters of Devils Lake are unleashed. Only an independent IJC inquiry coupled with an injunction can protect against this flagrant disregard for our rivers and our health.

Sincerely,

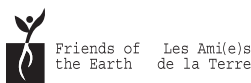
Brent Blackwelder

Brent Blackwelder, President
Friends of the Earth U.S.

Beatrice Olivastri

Beatrice Olivastri, Chief Executive Officer
Friends of the Earth Canada

CC. *The Right Honourable Paul Martin,*
Prime Minister of Canada



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