

Testimony
Senate Joint Resolution #7

by
Rich Moy, Chairman, Flathead Basin Commission

As chairman of the Flathead Basin Commission and on behalf of its members, the Flathead Basin Commission supports this resolution.

This resolution is consistent with the May 2004 and March 2005 letters that the FBC sent to the Montana Congressional delegation and others requesting that the International Joint Commission conduct a baseline assessment of the North Fork of the Flathead River Basin before any coal mining or coalbed methane extraction can begin.

Last year, British Columbia's own studies suggest that there is lack of baseline information from which to assess impacts of new coalmines and coalbed methane extraction projects in the North Fork of British Columbia.

The FBC is concerned that impacts from these mining activities could impact Glacier and Waterton Lakes National Parks in Montana and Alberta and water quality within the North Fork of the Flathead River and downstream to Flathead Lake.

This resolution is consistent with the letters sent by both Governor Judy Martz and Governor Brian Schweitzer to Premier Campbell of British Columbia requesting that a comprehensive environmental baseline assessment be completed by the International Joint Commission before the development of coal and coal bed methane gas in the North Fork of the Flathead River Basin of British Columbia.

It is interesting to note that Canada is trying to block North Dakota from draining Devils Lake water into the Red River as this river flows north into Manitoba. Canada is concerned that this diversion could introduce new species into the Red River. Canada was also primarily responsible for stopping the development of the Garrison Irrigation Project in North Dakota over similar concerns.

This resolution does not say no to resource development in the North Fork of the Flathead Basin in British Columbia. In fact, we cannot. But the Commission supports this resolution, as we want to make sure that the water quality and other impacts to Glacier National Park and to the North Fork River are identified and properly mitigated.