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Head or Tailings

It doesn't get any better than this: a clear blue lake teeming with rainbow trout, surrounded by lush forest providing an abundance of game, berries and medicinal plants.

To the Tsilhqot'in Nation, Fish Lake is a sacred place that has sustained them for generations.

To the Taseko mining company, it's an answer to prayer of a different kind: a cheap dump site for acid tailings from the proposed Prosperity gold-copper mine.



Plane Stupid

If you fly to the UK, you and your suitcases may end up bush-whacking through a throng of colourful direct-action types sporting balloons, banners and theatrical garb.

[Plane Stupid](#) is campaigning for an end to airport expansion and short-haul flights as the only credible way of slashing aviation's Godzilla-sized carbon footprint.

While super-gluing yourself to airport equipment may not be everybody's cup of tea, there's



Flathead Fracas

BC's [Flathead River Valley](#) has leapt into the United Nations spotlight.

On June 26, the World Heritage Committee voted unanimously to send a mission to Canada to examine energy and mining plans for the Flathead.

One proposal under consideration by the BC government is for a coal strip mine—that would dump 325 million tonnes of waste into a headwaters stream of the endangered Flathead River.

currently under federal environmental review.

In exchange, Taseko is offering to build and stock an artificial lake.

Shenanigans like this used to be prohibited by the Fisheries Act – until it was amended in 2002 to allow lakes and other freshwater bodies to be re-classified as "[tailings impoundment areas](#)".

Communities across Canada are fighting back to protect their life-sustaining water resources. [Watch a YouTube video](#) of Tse Key Ney elders telling the story of how they saved Amazay Lake near Smithers.

If you are concerned about Fish Lake and/or the devastation allowed by the gutting of the Fisheries Act, please email [Prime Minister Stephen Harper](#) and the [Federal Environment Minister Jim Prentice](#).

no denying the math. One transatlantic flight for a family of four [generates more CO2](#) than that family creates in a year. Plus, it is released at an altitude where its effect on climate change is more than double that on the ground, thanks to [radiative forcing](#) and other esoteric effects.

A softer path may be to embrace [low carbon travel](#).

"Low carbon travel is about taking a positive and sincere approach to sustainable living without abandoning our innate desire to interact with the world and the wonderful people who occupy it," says Jamie Andrews of [Go loco2](#) a unique travel agency specializing in low-carbon adventures to far-away places.

Ready to go? Take a 12-month no-fly pledge [here](#).

[Learn more.](#)

The UN decision came after Sierra Club BC and 10 other conservation groups petitioned the committee to declare the adjoining Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park a "World Heritage Site in Danger." A US government report says contaminants from the coal mine would reach Glacier park via the Flathead River in as little as 24 hours.

[See the press release.](#)

"We applaud the committee's decision," said Sierra Club BC spokesperson Sarah Cox. "We hope that swift action is taken to protect the Flathead permanently and to prevent Waterton-Glacier from becoming North America's only World Heritage Site in Danger."

[See the Vancouver Sun story.](#) [Take action](#) to protect the Flathead.

Boating Up Bute: A Sierra Club Fact-Finding Trip

Bute Inlet, a long and deep fjord 300 kilometres north of Vancouver, is sometimes known as "Canada's Himalayas". It has glacier-covered mountain slopes, temperate rainforest, and a stunning view of Mount Waddington, the highest peak entirely in BC.

In the news, Bute has become synonymous with a controversial power proposal to harness over 1,000 megawatts of electricity from 17-high elevation creeks and rivers, and march it over the mountains to the electrical grid.

In late June, Sierra Club staff and volunteers boated up the 75-kilometre inlet. We wanted a first-hand view of the scope of the development owned by Plutonic Power Corp and its partner General Electric

[Read our op-ed piece in the Vancouver Sun.](#)

Green is for Everyone

When Ukrainian-born Olga Minko and her family arrived in Canada, they wanted to learn more about recycling, composting and growing vegetables, but work, school and getting settled took up most of their time.



In a "green power" gold rush invisible to most of us, the BC government has granted more than 130 water-for-power licences. Close to 600 more applications are pending.

The sheer scale of Plutonic's proposal warrants questions and concern. It is 33 times larger than the 30 megawatt limit set by the state of California's renewable energy bill for run of river hydroelectric power. In addition to 17 stream diversions and 445 kilometres of transmission lines, the Bute project would involve 314 kilometres of roads, 142 bridges, 16 powerhouses, and a substation.

"As BC speeds up development of cleaner, carbon neutral energy, we need a well-thought, comprehensive and publicly acceptable template to assess the full environmental footprint of new power proposals," says Sierra Club BC [Executive Director George Heyman](#).

- Is the proposed development truly "green" when its impacts on habitat, species and irreplaceable ecosystems and landscapes are considered? Is a mix of additional alternatives, including wind and solar, less environmentally destructive?
- What is the "full carbon accounting" when emissions caused by construction and maintenance are factored in?
- What is the appropriate scale of a "green power" project – 1,000 megawatts like Bute or much smaller, like California's limit of 30 megawatts?
- What is the cumulative impact of dozens of power projects on a watershed?
- Will the new power replace dirty coal or natural gas fired generation, or will it be exported with no carbon reduction strings attached?

BC's gamut of water-for-power applications require community consultation, input from local governments, full carbon accounting and a cumulative environmental impacts assessment.

[Watch the Sierra Club BC website](#) for updates on power projects.

Enter the [Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society \(VIRCS\)](#) – the first settlement agency in Canada to incorporate environmental education into their services.

"Many newcomers are concerned about climate change and want to take action but do not have access to resources in their language or are simply not sure where to start," says Program Coordinator Gagan Leekha.

VIRCS offers [outings and workshops](#) on sustainable living as well as a [multilingual action resource](#) with lifestyle tips in Chinese, English, Punjabi and Spanish.

Olga is now a proud owner of a backyard composting bin – which she won courtesy of the Compost Education Centre – and is enthusiastic about spreading the word in her community.

"In addition to the environmental benefits, this program is helping our clients and volunteers find a real sense of involvement in their community. We are thrilled to see them make it theirs and grow it further," says Gagan.

Sierra Club BC thanks

Our warmest thanks go to the [BC Government and Service Employees' Union](#) (BCGEU) for supporting our efforts to promote equitable and effective climate change solutions. We greatly appreciate your contribution!



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Formed in 1969, [Sierra Club BC](#) is one of British Columbia's oldest and best-known environmental organizations.