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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WATER RESOURCES AT RISK DUE TO TAR SANDS PROJECTS, SAYS NFU

The unprecedented scale of the massive tar sands projects is putting Alberta's water resources in jeopardy, says the National Farmers Union (NFU).

The NFU submitted a brief outlining its concerns to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Environment, which is holding hearings this week in Alberta. At a news conference in Edmonton, representatives of the NFU detailed the negative consequences of tar sands extraction on water resources, the environment, rural communities and long-term food security. The NFU urged the Committee to push for sustainable renewable energy generation projects including wind, geothermal and solar.

"Extraction of bitumen from tar sands carries many severe negative consequences for water resources in Alberta and throughout the Mackenzie River drainage basin," stated Ken Stemo, an NFU member from Rimbey, Alberta. "The mining and upgrading processes draw down the available surface and groundwater supplies, while leaving toxic contaminants at risk of leaching back into the ground, rivers and lakes. The negative impact on the health of the environment, wildlife and people is profound."

Stemo said "Mankind has existed for millennia without oil, but food and water have been daily necessities. We must not destroy what we really need to survive – a healthy environment, productive soil and clean water."

Jan Slomp, NFU Alberta Coordinator, said the impact of the tar sands extends well beyond the mine sites in the north. "The infrastructure of pipelines, upgraders and natural gas wells in southern areas must be counted as well," he said. "To supply the massive amounts of natural gas needed for bitumen upgraders, there has been extensive drilling throughout the province for natural gas and methane. Much of this has occurred on productive farmland. Drilling for coalbed methane is particularly troublesome as the coal seams are often intertwined with aquifers."

The NFU brief on the tar sands and its impact on water resources can be downloaded from the NFU website at www.nfu.ca.

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