

October 23, 2019

Natural Resources Conservation Board approves revised Cougar Creek debris flood retention structure

The Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) has found the Town of Canmore's revised Cougar Creek debris flood retention structure application to be in the public interest. The NRCB concluded that the structure will protect public safety, property, and infrastructure and has no unacceptable environmental impacts.

The NRCB originally issued a decision on November 15, 2018, determining that the application was in the public interest. However, prior to authorization through order in council, the Town advised that it was revising the project's design to shorten the construction schedule and reduce costs. The NRCB suspended its decision and requested that the Town file a revised application. The Town filed its revised application on September 6, 2019, describing impacts on social, economic, and environmental indicators stemming from design changes to the dam structure, the spillway, and the access road. The NRCB has now reviewed the revised application and remains satisfied that the project is in the public interest having regard for the social, economic, and environmental effects of the project.

The 2013 debris flood at Cougar Creek caused devastating destruction of homes, businesses, and infrastructure. The flood put lives at risk, severed highways and the railway, and caused losses in the tens of millions of dollars. The nearly 33 metre high debris flood retention structure will be located on Cougar Creek, approximately two kilometres northeast of the Trans-Canada Highway. During high rainfall events, water and large woody and rock debris will be temporarily held back behind the structure in an inundation area. Water from this inundation area will be released back to Cougar Creek downstream of the structure in a controlled manner.

The total cost of the project is estimated at \$48.87 million. The provincial and federal governments are contributing \$44.87 million for project construction and ancillary activities such as the environmental impact assessment, structure design, and dam safety review. The Town of Canmore will be responsible for ongoing costs associated with maintenance and operation.

The Natural Resources Conservation Board is an independent, quasi-judicial board of the Government of Alberta, established by the *Natural Resources Conservation Board Act*.

Related information:

- Background – Summary of revised application, key findings, conditions, and Board review process
- Board Decision NR 2018-01 and Board Decision Addendum NR 2018-01

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