

Environmental Laws Do Not Apply To All

..... **Former Sask. Minister Bill Boyd fined.**

Bill Boyd has been handed a fine and ordered to repair the damages for cultivating wildlife habitat and significantly altering the configuration of the bed, bank or boundary of a river, stream, lake, creek, marsh or other watercourse or water body. He did the work without obtaining a permit or applying for one. Protecting water quality and aquatic habitat is important to our well-being and are core responsibilities of the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency.

In February Premier Scott Moe told reporters that "I think the people can have faith in the system that we have in place and that it is accountable — that everybody is accountable, to the same set of laws".

Water is a Crown resource and belongs to us all. Crown prosecutor Matthew Miazga said, "I think it's important for people to recognize that just because you might own property that's adjacent to a river or a stream or a creek or a lake, that doesn't give you the right to develop that property without obtaining the proper permits."

So why then is the illegal alteration of our waterways the norm in Saskatchewan? Why does illegal drainage continue uncontrolled, without licenses, and without any enforcement or consequence despite our laws? WSA estimates there are over 150,000 quarter sections with illegal drainage on them and that number grows annually as new illegal ditches continue to be dug. WSA's report estimate there are over 88,000 acres of illegal drained marshes flowing into the Quill Lakes. Since 2016 WSA has been saying that it was going to be closing illegal drainage in the Quill Lakes watershed yet no drains have been closed, new drains are being dug, and no one has been charged.

Clearly WSA is failing their responsibility, as significant damages to our water and environment through illegal drainage continues, with no regard for the law. How then can we have faith in the system? Why is it that some must pay the penalty for "altering the configuration of the bed, bank or boundary of a river, stream, lake, creek or marsh", while others are allowed to continue with illegal drainage works, altering and destroying marshes and wetlands, continuing to drain water into the Quills, without a permit?

This would indicate not everybody is "accountable to the same set of laws".

Submitted by Saskatchewan Alliance for Water Sustainability
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