



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **CWF Brings Water Issues to International Conservation Forum in Spain**

The Canadian Wildlife Federation will be making a splash with its Water Under Fire public service announcements and webisodes at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Barcelona Oct. 5-14.

“Declining water quality and quantity will be one of the biggest issues facing this country and the world in coming years,” says Wade Luzny, Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Wildlife Federation. “Adequate supplies of clean water are critical for both human and wildlife populations and our Water Under Fire PSA and webisode series can help everyone understand this essential resource and how to conserve and protect it.”

More than 8,000 of the world’s decision makers in sustainable development will be at the IUCN conference in Barcelona to debate and decide solutions for the world’s most pressing environment and development issues. This includes representatives of governments, academia, the public sector, UN agencies and social organizations. CWF staff from Montreal, Ottawa and Regina will attend the forum along with Dr. Rick Mrazek, a professor from the University of Lethbridge who spearheaded the Water Under Fire PSA and webisode campaign. Mrazek and CWF will present the Water Under Fire “Conserve and Protect” video in English, French and Spanish at the World Conservation Congress Water Pavilion. DVDs will be distributed along with other CWF promotional materials directing the public to the CWF website, where Water Under Fire PSA’s, webisodes and curricula can be downloaded free of charge.

“Canada has about one-fifth of the world’s water supplies so it’s up to us to lead the way in new and innovative educational approaches to conservation,” says Luzny.

The world’s rivers, oceans and lakes are bombarded by threats: pollution infests ecosystems with harmful chemicals, pesticides encourage underwater plant growth that absorb mass amounts of oxygen, acid precipitation can throw off the balance in watery ecosystems, and oil spills wipe out wildlife that rely on these water to survive. Moreover, climate change drives up water temperatures, dams stop fish from making the trek to spawning and feeding grounds, and over fishing threaten whole species of fish, shellfish and plants.

“Water is under fire but we can do something about it. We all have to think about our activities and how they impact wildlife and habitat and make a personal commitment to conserve and protect water,” says Luzny.

#### **About the Canadian Wildlife Federation:**

The Canadian Wildlife Federation is dedicated to fostering awareness and appreciation of our natural world. By spreading knowledge of human impacts on the environment, sponsoring research, promoting the sustainable use of natural resources, recommending changes to policy and co-operating with like-minded partners, CWF encourages a future in which Canadians can live in harmony with nature. Visit [www.cwf-fcf.org](http://www.cwf-fcf.org) for more information.

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## Water Factsheet

- Canada has the longest coastline in the world — 243,793 Kilometres.
- Seventy per cent of the planet is covered in rivers, oceans, streams and lakes. These valuable resources are vital to all life on Earth.
- Canada's waters help us breathe easy by emitting oxygen into the air, keep us cool in the summer by absorbing solar energy and satiate our hunger with a range of seafood.
- Canada's rivers, oceans and lakes are bombarded by threats: pollution infests ecosystems with harmful chemicals, pesticides encourage underwater plant growth that absorb mass amounts of oxygen, acid rain can throw off the balance in watery ecosystems, and oil spills wipe out wildlife that rely on these water to survive. Moreover, climate change drives up water temperatures, dams stop fish from making the trek to spawning and feeding grounds, and over fishing threaten whole species of fish, shellfish and plants.
- Since 1850, the number of glaciers in the world is estimated to have dropped from 150 to fewer than 50. The Canadian Wildlife Federation is very concerned about the impact of climate change on water supplies.
- More plants and animals live in water than on land. In North America alone, more than 160 species of birds depend on wetlands for their lives.
- Canada is home to almost 25 per cent of the world's wetlands — the largest percentage of wetlands in the world.
- Eighty per cent of ocean pollution is caused by human activity on land.
- Billions of litres of untreated sewage go into waterways from cities and communities every year.
- Oceans represent the last true frontier on this planet. In fact, we probably know more about the surface of the moon than we do about the sea floor.
- Even if you've never seen an ocean, you are connected to it. Water is always making its way from where you live to an ocean through a network of streams, ponds, marshes, lakes and rivers.
- Eventually all water flows to sea.



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## **Backgrounder: Water Under Fire**

Do you know where water goes once it's flushed down the toilet, what issues are facing our water supply, where the water that pours out of our tap comes from, or what happens to water once it goes down the storm sewer?

The Water Under Fire series of public service announcements and webisodes provides the answers to these questions, and explains why it is important to learn more about water and find ways that you can help protect our most important resource through everyday activities.

Each of the five 30- and 60-second videos describe some of the challenges facing Canada's fresh water. The website, [www.waterunderfire.ca](http://www.waterunderfire.ca), also provides longer three to five minute webisodes and links to additional resources for use by students, community groups, teachers and the general public. Television stations, schools and conservation groups have been using the Water Under Fire PSA's and webisode series to encourage the public to become water aware.

The Water Under Fire PSA's and webisodes are part of an educational program of the Canadian Wildlife Federation and its partners focusing on how to conserve and protect water and understand surface, ground, waste and storm water systems. The PSA's and webisodes are free for public use and are available through the website [cwf-fcf.org](http://www.cwf-fcf.org).

CWF and its partners have developed a classroom ready educator's kit aimed at encouraging young Canadians to become better stewards of our water. It includes teaching material for children ages five to 17 and is designed to inform students about the value of marine ecosystems, the impacts our actions have on aquatic wildlife and habitats and the need to conserve them.

What can you do? Use low-flow shower heads or buy Energy Star appliances to reduce the amount of water you use. Get rid of paints and solvents at your local toxic waste disposal area instead of pouring them down the drain or replace pesticides with environmentally friendly solutions to stop harmful chemicals from trickling into our waters. Small changes make a big difference.



## **Profile of Water Under Fire Spokesperson**

### **Dr. Rick Mrazek**

Dr. Rick Mrazek is internationally recognized as a leading science, technology and environmental educator. His research areas include science education, integrating environmental education in school curriculum, as well as using emerging technologies in teaching and learning.

Dr. Mrazek holds a PhD. and M.Ed. in Secondary Science Education, Curriculum and Instruction, a B.A.Sc. in Earth Sciences and a B.Ed. With Distinction in Secondary Physical Sciences.

The University of Lethbridge science professor traveled from coast to coast across Canada to co-produce this award-winning seven part television series on the nation's water crisis — even donning a windsurfing suit and snorkel to film salmon underwater. Now, he's developed new elements in his 25-year effort to help the public understand critical water quality and quantity issues — 30-and 60-second public service announcements on water issues and solutions along with three five-minute webisodes. He's hoping these videos will help ensure water is one day recognized as a human right.

“You have to be optimistic. You have to have faith in humankind. There will come a time when people will wake up,” says Mrazek, who is working with the Canadian Wildlife Federation to raise awareness of the importance of water as it affects humans and the habitats of wildlife.

Each individual has been noted as requiring 50 litres of water a day, Mrazek says: five for drinking, 10 for cooking, 15 for bathing and 20 for sanitation. But one-third of the world's population is trying to survive below the level. In fact, in some countries people have access to only three litres of water per day. Meanwhile, Canadians are using 300 litres of water a day on average, six times the required level. The amount of drinkable water left on earth is diminishing every day because of global climate change and a growing population will use more water. What's left is being polluted by industry and our own activities.

The facts are staggering: 10 million deaths per year are water related. But Mrazek says people are desensitized to statistics. That's why he started using multimedia methods to show the public, particularly teachers, students and parents, the seriousness of these challenges and how they can help protect water through everyday activities.

“Water is a more precious commodity than fuel,” he says. “We have to start not only conserving but gaining a different understanding of water.”

It doesn't have to be complicated. It takes five bottles of water to make a plastic water bottle, so simply by getting your drinking water from the tap, where possible, you can be part of the solution, Mrazek says.

The Water Under Fire PSA's and webisodes are available in English and French, along with resources such as lesson plans and teacher's guides developed by the Canadian Wildlife Federation. The 60-

second "Conserve and Protect" PSA has been translated into Spanish and will be shown by CWF in Spain at the World Conservation Forum this fall. Advice provided in the video: Use less water when watering the lawn, taking a shower and brushing your teeth. Never pour or flush toxins and unused medicine down the drain.

The video is hosted by a student who explains that you pay more for bottled water than for gasoline. "It's our turn to take care of the planet and I think we can do a better job," she says.

By making the public service announcements and webisodes available to the public free of charge at [waterunderfire.ca](http://waterunderfire.ca) and at [cwf-fcf.org](http://cwf-fcf.org), Mrazek is hopeful the message will hit home. He has been working on that goal throughout his career as an elementary and secondary school teacher, university professor, researcher and author as well as through his hobbies: fish and wildlife instructor, dive master, scuba teacher, sailor, and fishing educator. He would also like kids to reconnect with nature.

Wade Luzny, Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Wildlife Federation, says water conservation and protection is vital for our future. That's why CWF has partnered with Mrazek and the University of Lethbridge to bring the Water Under Fire messages to a wide audience.

"The Canadian Wildlife Federation is dedicated to ensuring an appreciation of our natural world and a lasting legacy of healthy wildlife and habitat by informing and educating the public, advocating responsible human actions and representing wildlife on conservation issues," Luzny said.