

Water May 23, 1991 destined for U.S. — critic

By **ADRIENNE TANNER**
of The Advocate

ALIX — A government plan to raise the level of Buffalo Lake is part of a scheme to sell water to the United States, a Central Alberta environmentalist charged Wednesday.

Referring to a 20-year-old Alberta Environment plan, Dr. Martha Kostuch said Buffalo Lake will eventually be linked to the Red Deer and Battle Rivers.

“Rather than stabilize Buffalo Lake, the intent is rather to use it as a storage pond,” she said.

Water from the lake will be diverted south for irrigation purposes and eventually for sale to the Americans, the Rocky Mountain House veterinarian said.

Leave the lake alone, says Ducks Unlimited/B1

Peter Melnychuk, Alberta's assistant deputy environment minister, denied Dr. Kostuch's claims.

Mr. Melnychuk acknowledged the plan came from his offices, but said it is years out of date. The province has no plans to sell Alberta's water, he said.

Raising the water level of Buffalo Lake by 30 cm would not be enough to create a useful holding pond, he added.

Under the current plan, the water level would be stabilized by pumping water from the Red Deer River to Alix Lake and then through Parlby Creek to Buffalo Lake.

Dr. Kostuch slammed spending \$13 million to benefit a handful of local residents.

And she called for a federal environmental review.

Dr. Kostuch's comments upset many people at the last day of public hearings on the water management project.

Jill Page, vice-president of the Pelican Point Community Association, reminded the audience that the benefits of the project outweigh the costs.

A government-commissioned environmental study initially suggested the project was a money loser — creating only \$11 million in benefits while carrying a \$13-million price tag.

But Wednesday morning one of the report's authors, economist Brent Friedenberg, admitted he had erred in his calculations. The net benefits are slightly positive, he said.

Some benefits, like having a secure supply of drinking water, are too great to measure, said Linda Shultz, the municipal administrator for the Village of Mirror.

Mirror has been searching for a new water supply since the 1970s. But even when improvements to the water and sewer system were made in 1976, in dry months the village would often run out of water by 4 p.m.

If the water project goes ahead, Mirror will be able to draw water from Parlby Creek, which would no longer suffer dry spells, she said.

The three-member panel will make a recommendation as soon as possible, panel chairman Don Thorne said.