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EUB Requires Environmental Impact Information for Revised Cheviot Mine Proposal

By Philip Clement, AWA Conservation Biologist

Since our last Cheviot update, the parent companies holding the coal leases for the proposed Cheviot mine, Luscar and Consol, have reached an agreement to merge with Fording River Coal, the largest coal company in Canada. Although the parent companies will now have more alternatives, the ramifications of the merger for the Cheviot mine are unclear.

A letter sent to Lorne Taylor, Minister of the Environment, by AWA, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Canadian Nature Federation, Mining Watch Canada, Pembina Institute for Appropriate Development, Environmental Resource Centre of Alberta, Toxics Watch Society, Sierra Club-Prairie Chapter, Jasper Environmental Association, and Ben Gadd requested the completion of a thorough assessment of the potential impacts of the haul road application and the entire satellite mine proposal on fish and fish habitat of the McLeod River system.

In response, Lorne Taylor wrote, "I am of the opinion that an environmental impact assessment report is not necessary due to the nature of the proposed activity. I am satisfied that the existing regulatory process can effectively and efficiently provide for public consultation and the collection of all necessary information to properly assess this application. Therefore, I will not direct Cardinal River Coal to prepare and submit an environmental impact assessment report."

However, the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (EUB) requested that Cardinal River Coals Ltd. provide information on all potential environmental impacts of their revised proposal for the Cheviot coal mine and not just the industrial haul road the company has applied for. As the EUB requested a revised EIA, it is possible that the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA) will conclude that a revised EIA of the new mine proposal is required under CEAA as well.

