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Alberta Energy Regulator Rules that Coal and Wildlife Don't Mix

On July 9th, the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) denied Horn Ridge Resources Ltd.'s application to explore for coal in the Kakwa wilderness, west of Grande Cache.

AWA commends the AER for refusing this application as it poses a significant risk to valued wildlife populations and the ecological integrity of sensitive alpine and sub-alpine landscapes.

"AWA is pleased with this decision from the AER as it prioritizes the security of local wildlife populations such as bighorn sheep and mountain goats, species known to be sensitive to human activities," said Nissa Petterson, Conservation Specialist. "The proposed exploration area also encompasses the ranges of woodland caribou and grizzly bears, two species at risk in Alberta."

In accordance with the Code of Practice for Exploration Operations (COP) under the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, Horn Ridge Resources submitted a Mountain Goat and Bighorn Sheep Management Plan. The AER concluded the plan insufficiently addressed and mitigated exploration activities posing a direct threat to wildlife. The Notice of Decision from the AER stated: "...there is outstanding risk that the drilling activity and helicopter-related disturbance...would directly and negatively affect mountain goat and bighorn sheep."

If Horn Ridge Resources requests a regulatory appeal of this decision, the AER should reject it. The company's proposed coal exploration activities present unacceptable sensory and direct disturbance impacts to mountain goats and bighorn sheep. These impacts were highlighted in the Statement of Concern AWA filed with the AER about this project. In the Statement of Concern, AWA pointed to peer-reviewed research that demonstrated helicopter overflights have the capacity to significantly disintegrate social groups of mountain goat herds and indirectly cause harm to fleeing individuals.

"This decision is an important victory for the integrity of Alberta's wilderness. However, AWA remains concerned that a project-by-project approach to regulating coal mining activities in the eastern slopes and Rocky mountains will inadequately address the cumulative effects of new coal mines alongside other prominent land-uses," added Petterson.

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[PDF Copy of AER Closure Letter to AWA](#)

[PDF Copy of AWA's Statement of Concern for Horn Ridge Coal Exploration](#)

[PDF Copy of AER's Notice of Decision for Horn Ridge Coal Exploration](#)

