
AWA and the Grassy Mountain Coal Project Joint Review Panel Hearings

On October 27th a federal-provincial Joint Review Panel will begin public hearings into the Grassy Mountain Coal Project. This open-pit coal mine would be located approximately seven kilometres north of Blairmore and would be designed to produce up to 4.5 million tonnes of metallurgical coal per year. Benga Mining, the project's proponent, expects to mine coal there for the next 20-plus years. The mine would sprawl over more than 60 square kilometres. All of the mine's

operations would occur in one or more Environmentally Significant Areas.

AWA will be at those public hearings. We have joined forces with the Grassy Mountain Group, a group of local landowners in the Crowsnest, to oppose this major threat to the ecological integrity of this corner of southwest Alberta. The law firm of Ackroyd LLP is representing our coalition.

In addition to submissions of the landowners, our Coalition retained experts to examine many of the impacts this project will have on the environment and the people who live in the Crowsnest. Our experts' evidence and

their subsequent testimony to the Panel will address:

- Land use, Access, and Residential Impacts;
- Property devaluation;
- Water impacts, including ground water and surface water impacts, inflow needs assessment and water chemistry, impacts on aquatic resources including westslope cutthroat trout, and climate change;
- Wildlife, biodiversity, and habitats impact assessment;
- Noise and air pollution impacts;
- Socio-economic effects; and
- Coal quality.

AWA's participation in this hearing is the latest chapter in AWA's history of opposition to this proposal. AWA has objected to Grassy Mountain and other proposed projects in the Oldman and Crowsnest Pass areas since the Grassy Mountain's initial exploration and drilling program began in 2013.

Thanks largely to the fact this project must be approved by the federal government, AWA was granted the right to participate fully at the upcoming public hearings into this proposal. Full participation enabled AWA and its coalition partners to submit the expert reports mentioned above. It also enables our lawyers from Ackroyd LLP to cross-examine the corporation and its experts about the project and to submit a final argument to the three-member panel.

Despite the UCP government's efforts to encourage the exploitation of coal in Alberta, the current metallurgical coal economic climate is not friendly to these ambitions. Teck Resources Ltd. cited poor economics as the reason for not proceeding with the Mackenzie Redcap project that would extend the life of the Cheviot Mine. Importantly, Teck had the regulatory approvals in place needed to carry out this project.

The hearings commence on October 27, 2020. Due to COVID-19, they will be conducted entirely online, using electronic means. The public will be able to watch the hearings via YouTube and AWA will pass on those details once they are available.

- Ian Urquhart