

Introducing a Blog on the Grassy Mountain Joint Review Panel Hearing

November 8, 2020



The media landscape has changed profoundly in the last decade. The rise of social media is arguably the most important of those changes. But, in Alberta, I suspect another very significant change has been a growing absence of attention to environmental stories in the mainstream media.

From 1987 to 2020 I taught at the University of Alberta and published on issues at the crossroads of natural resource exploitation and conservation in this province. Pulp mills, development in the Eastern Slopes, and the tar sands consumed much of my attention in that career.

In the early days, I learned much from the in-depth reporting I could rely on in the *Edmonton Journal* from the likes of Ed Struzik and Hanneke Brooymans. I think the critical light they shone on the issues that interested me is dimmer

now than it was then. While on-line publications like *The Tyee* and *The Narwhal* along with journalists such as Bob Weber, Colette Derworiz, and Cathy Ellis continue that tradition I still believe those issues don't receive as much attention as they deserve. This is particularly unhealthy at a point in history when phrases like "the climate crisis" or "the biodiversity crisis" are used often by "respectable," not fringe, actors.

The Grassy Mountain Joint Review Panel hearing into Benga Mining Ltd.'s proposal to bring metallurgical coal mining back to the Crowsnest Pass is an environmental issue that warrants more sustained media coverage than the editors of mainstream media outlets have delivered. While the beginning of this hearing attracted considerable media attention, coverage essentially has vanished as the substantive arguments about the project – pro and con – have commenced.

This lack of coverage is a shame for many reasons. Most importantly perhaps, this Panel's recommendation and the ultimate decision on the fate of the project may very well be precedent setting. The provincial government's decision to revoke the 1976 Coal Policy signaled Alberta's intention to open up much of the Eastern Slopes to coal mining. Approval of Grassy Mountain will encourage more foreign mining companies to pursue their corporate ambitions in the shadows of the Rockies.

Also, in the first few days of the hearing, people from the region spoke well and passionately about why they supported or opposed this coal project. Those voices deserve to be heard. Finally, Benga has made many claims about what its project will or will not do. Are those claims credible?

These are some of the reasons why AWA is creating a blog about the Grassy Mountain hearing. In that blog I'll offer you information and, hopefully, insight into this very consequential public hearing.

The blog is found [here](#). Its first instalment presents my synopsis of a few of the important themes that were introduced in the introductory remarks hearing participants delivered during the first three days of the hearing.

Finally, on a very different note, I hope you will join us for the second Martha Kostuch wilderness defenders lecture. On November 17th at 7pm former Member of Parliament Linda Duncan promises to inspire us as she reflects on

her lifelong mission to strengthen environmental protection and rights. Please register for this free lecture [here](#).

Ian Urquhart, Conservation Director



Dedicated to the conservation of wilderness and completion of a protected areas network, AWA inspires communities to care for Alberta's wild spaces through awareness and action.

[Donate](#)

Copyright © 2020 Alberta Wilderness Association, All rights reserved.

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

