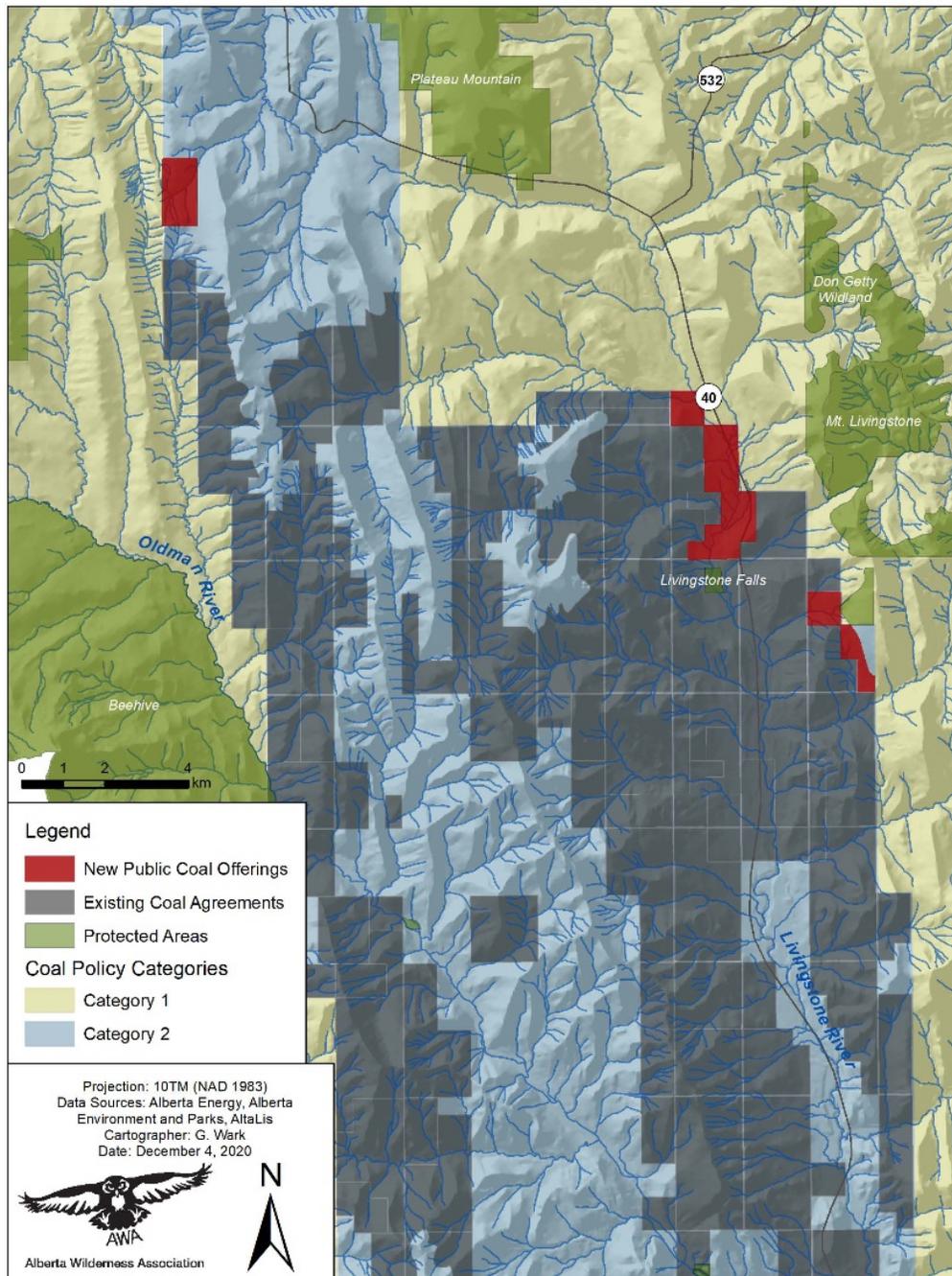


Continuing the Sacrifice of the Eastern Slopes to Old King Coal

December 4, 2020

New Public Coal Offerings in Alberta's Livingstone Region - Leases C0082, C0083, C0084



My apologies if I'm filling up your inbox with this post. Our staff may have included you on both our general AWA list as well as a list created for those who participated in our Grassy Mountain campaign.

Sincerely,
Ian

Yesterday, the Alberta government took another step towards turning Alberta's Eastern Slopes into little more than a string of coal mines. Nearly 2,000 hectares of coal leases were offered for sale in the Rockies of southern Alberta. This offering, together with existing coal leases and applications for coal leases, confirms the government's ambition to sacrifice the southern Alberta mountain landscape for coal.

"With these lease offerings, Alberta now has invited the coal mining industry to strip mine and decapitate mountain tops for roughly 840 square kilometres (324 square miles) immediately north of Highway 3 in the Crowsnest Pass," said Dr. Ian Urquhart, Conservation Director of Alberta Wilderness Association.

This is the first public offering of coal leases in the Rockies and Foothills since the Government of Alberta abolished the longstanding Coal Policy on June 1, 2020. That policy, established by Premier Lougheed's Progressive Conservative government in 1976, prioritized watersheds and "local areas of high environmental sensitivity" over open-pit coal mining. Yesterday's announcement confirms that the Kenney government rejects that logic. "All of these lands put up for sale," Urquhart said, "are in parts of our mountain landscapes the Lougheed government's coal policy treasured and protected."

"The Livingstone River, an important water source in the Oldman River watershed, runs for more than two miles through one of the tracts of the Foothills the government hopes to lease to coal miners," said Urquhart. "Once these lands are leased, more than six miles of this important headwaters stream will run through lands leased for open-pit coal mining. The Kenney government has stripped the modern, 21st Century commitment to watershed protection out of its perspective on coal mining."

In its public offering, the Ministry of Energy identifies that all of the leases offered for sale are on lands with some combination of the following features: heritage resources, critical wildlife habitat, key wildlife and biodiversity zones,

mountain goat and sheep areas, and grizzly bear protection zones. “The reasonable person,” Urquhart suggested, “would see these characteristics as ones that would kill any thoughts of leasing these lands for coal mining.”

The timing of yesterday’s public offering also appears to have been politically-motivated. It came one day after the end of the evidentiary portion of the federal-provincial review panel into the Grassy Mountain Coal Project. “During that hearing,” Urquhart noted, “many interveners warned that Grassy Mountain was the thin edge of the coal mining wedge. If this lease sale was announced during the hearing, interveners could have referred to it. They could have urged the Panel to recognize that a long line of coal mining promoters with designs on the Eastern Slopes has formed behind Benga Mining.”

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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.

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