

On the Death of the Grassy Mountain Coal Project

June 17, 2021



Today, the Grassy Mountain Coal Project Joint Review Panel categorically rejected Benga Mining’s applications for all the provincial approvals its project needed. The Panel wrote: “In our capacity as a panel of AER hearing commissioners, we find that the project’s significant adverse environmental effects on surface water quality and westslope cutthroat trout and habitat outweigh the low to moderate positive economic impacts of the project. Therefore, we find that the project is not in the public interest.” Without the AER approvals the project cannot proceed – there is no need for the federal government to give any consideration to the project.

“In this landmark decision,” said AWA’s Conservation Director Ian Urquhart, “the Joint Review Panel treated the significant adverse environmental effects of Grassy Mountain with a seriousness Albertans have seldom, if ever, seen before.”

The Panel viewed skeptically Benga’s assertions of the economic benefits the Grassy Mountain Project would deliver regionally and provincially. What is most striking though is the Panel’s conclusion that, even if it took Benga’s assertions at face value, “the character and severity of the

environmental effects are such that we must reach the conclusion that approval of the *Coal Conservation Act* applications is not in the public interest.”

“This Joint Review Panel decision is one with an eye to the future,” concluded Urquhart. “By stressing the importance of surface water quality and natural wonders such as westslope cutthroat trout, the Panel told governments and corporations alike that the status of those resources tomorrow must be privileged today.”

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