

If Wildfire Smoke Has You Indoors...Write to Alberta's Coal Policy Committee

July 25, 2021

It's just over a month now since the Alberta Energy Regulator rejected the Grassy Mountain Coal Project and federal Minister Wilkinson announced he would require impact assessments of any proposed metallurgical coal mines that could release selenium into water bodies.

We're winning the campaign to keep coal mining out of the Eastern Slopes. But, the campaign won't be over until we get a commitment from all provincial political parties that metallurgical coal mining has no place on that iconic landscape.

That leads me to ask you this...please write to the Coal Policy Committee that is being chaired by Dr. Ron Wallace. We need the Committee to conclude that a modern coal policy is a "no coal" policy. One of the most impressive aspects of the Grassy Mountain hearing was the fact that more than 4,300 people commented on the project. Only 69 (1.6%) supported a mine at Grassy Mountain.

It's a goal we should strive to realize for the Coal Policy Committee's consultation. Here's the link to the Committee's website: <https://www.alberta.ca/coal-policy-engagement.aspx> It invites you to share your views on a coal policy with the committee by email to energy.coalpolicy@gov.ab.ca Another link is for "technical or fact-based documents." It's here: https://your.alberta.ca/coal-policy-committee?tool=survey_tool&tool_id=technical-submissions#tool_tab

Here are a few points if you're looking for ideas about why the Committee should recommend against any coal mining in our Rockies and Foothills:

- On March 29th, Dr. Wallace said the Committee's "job is to first of all listen to the widest spectrum of people in Alberta..." and that "a lot of the views are going to be based on aesthetics, values, and traditional values..." The Committee should give aesthetics, as well as the impact coal mining will have on recreational activities, an important place in their work.

- Water. Water quality (pollution from selenium and other toxins) and water allocation (where will the water come from to "wash" a mine's coal – and how will that affect the amount of water available to municipalities, First Nations, ranchers and irrigators...and the ecological needs of our headwaters) strongly favour a total ban on mining. Climate change models anticipate a drier southwest Alberta in the future.

- With respect to water quality, remind the Committee that the Joint Review Panel into the Grassy Mountain Coal Project concluded that Benga's mine would have "significant adverse environmental effects on surface water quality..." Benga didn't demonstrate to the Panel that its proposed mining technologies would mitigate those effects. That's a very strong position for why coal mining simply shouldn't be allowed.

- Threats to species-at-risk such as westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout. The presence of these species on Alberta's landscapes is more and more precarious. Coal mining will amplify the threats these species face from habitat degradation. Note on the map below the extent to which coal mine leases overlap with critical westslope cutthroat trout habitat and core grizzly bear habitat.

- Given the metallurgical coal production futures predicted by organizations such as the International Energy Agency and the World Steel Association the economics of coal mining are suspect. AWA argued this in

our June 9th presentation to the Committee. We also raised important questions about the amount in royalties coal mining could deliver to the provincial treasury. Links to our PowerPoint presentation (briefer) and to the full submission are here: <https://albertawilderness.ca/awa-appears-before-alberta-coal-policy-committee/>

- With respect to economics, you may want to remind the Committee that these economic arguments figured importantly in the Joint Review Panel's reasons for rejecting Grassy Mountain. The Panel concluded that: "Benga's estimated royalty payments are likely overstated." They also wrote, with respect to the risks associated with coal prices, evolving steel making technologies, and climate change, that: "We find that Benga presented an overly optimistic economic analysis that did not adequately consider these economic risks, which could undermine project economic viability, employment, and payments to governments later in the mine life."

- I think the Panel reached a profound conclusion when it wrote that "even if the positive economic impacts are as great as predicted by Benga, the character and severity of the environmental effects are such that we must reach the conclusion that approval...is not in the public interest." So...even if the economics of coal mining were as good as the promoters advertise, the environmental effects are still too severe. The Committee should appreciate this.

- Finally, urge the Committee to listen to the people. Whatever measure you use – the Coal Committee's own survey, ThinkHQ's February 2021 survey, Facebook groups/members – the public has made it clear it doesn't want to see coal mining along our Eastern Slopes: https://albertawilderness.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/20210518_nr_coal_survey_environmental_concerns_trump_economic_benefits.pdf

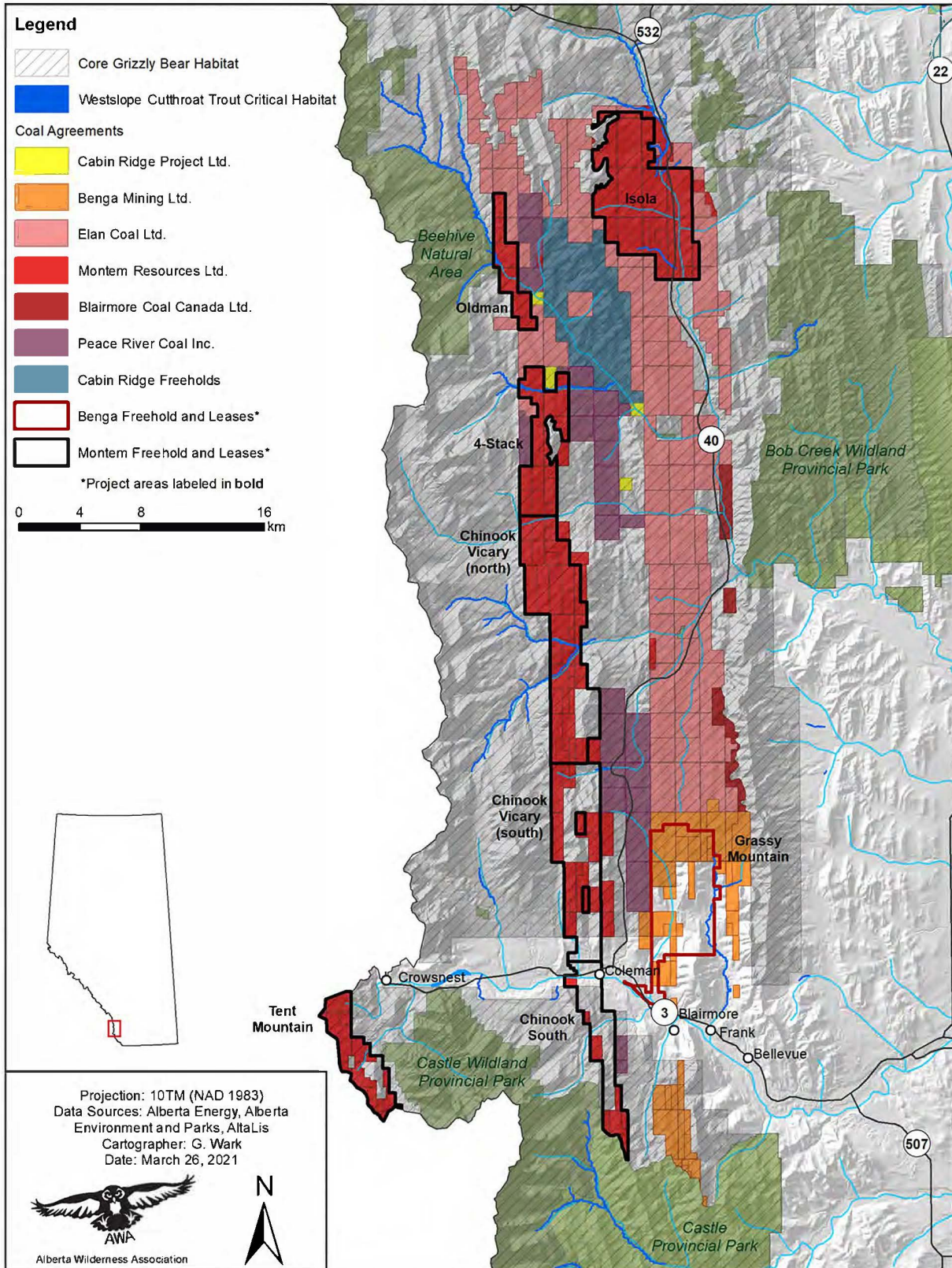
Please write to the Committee and let's keep up the pressure to ensure that open-pit coal mining never again despoils Alberta's landscapes.

Thanks,

Ian

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Coal Leases and Species at Risk Habitat along the Southern Eastern Slopes





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