

AGENDA  
COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING  
MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF PINCHER CREEK  
February 11, 2025  
11:00 am  
Council Chambers

- 1) Approval of Agenda
- 2) Delegations
  - a) 11:00 am to 11:20 am - Bennink Farms – Road Usage by Commercial Businesses
  - b) 11:20 am to 11:40 am - Livingstone Landowners Group
- 3) Closed Session
  - a) Public Works Call Log – FOIP Sec. 24.1
  - b) Public Works Modernization – FOIP Sec. 24.1
- 4) Round Table
- 5) Adjournment

To the Editor:

There is much information circulating these days around the development of the Grassy Mountain Coal Mine. It is safe to say that depending on where one gathers information, that information could be presented as For It or Against It.

There are several very valid issues surrounding Grassy Mtn. but I'd suggest the biggest being the risks associated with water contamination and the questionable assurance that there will be a sufficient volume of water to supply both, a mine with its required needs from the headwaters, as well as the other 200,000 downstream users in Southern Alberta. And the flow requirements for Saskatchewan and Manitoba are not to be ignored. In thinking about that, here are some very valid points to consider.

- We need an honest and objective science-based decision that has the interests of the broad community of Albertans at hand, first and foremost.
- All residents of the watershed are affected.
- The concerns are for the watershed fish, wildlife, grasslands and people.
- The negative impacts can be monumental.
- 90% of the water in the Oldman River is from the headwaters of the Eastern Slopes.
- The Oldman River is the source of water for at least 200,000 people downstream.
- The grasslands downstream are highly dependent on mountain snowpack and the headwaters.
- The drought conditions that we see more and more are showing signs of continuing.
- Mining permanently removes large areas of watershed from production.
- Reclaimed land cannot regrow the natural forest which retains water for slow release.

### **Selenium (Se)**

- We need it but in very, very small amounts.
- This is a top concern for everyone who drinks water, waters their vegetable garden, grows crops for feeding cattle or feeding people. Selenium doesn't go away. It continues to increase.
- Healthy trout populations are a sign of healthy waters. Selenium is known to cause the collapse of fish populations and the living (or dying) proof of that is right across the border in the Elk River system in British Columbia. The Fording River has lost 93% of its Westslope Cutthroat trout population. We DO NOT need to repeat that condition here in Alberta.
- Water wells in and around Sparwood have been poisoned and now people there are on bottled water.

- Groundwater wells near Blairmore are already exceeding guidelines from past mining.
- City of Lethbridge, Fort Macleod, Taber and many other communities draw their water from the Oldman River and have no alternative source.
- A considerable number of irrigation operations draw their water from the Oldman River.
- We do not have other rivers to draw from like they have in the Elk Valley so our risk is higher.
- Our water treatment plants are not set up to treat selenium.
- Billions of dollars are invested in growing food crops and food processing plants, both representing far more jobs than a coal mine is going to provide. And there is the big trade off with regard to job opportunities at the Grassy Mountain coal mine. A non-starter argument.
- Irrigated specialty crops and intensive livestock operations depend on clean water and enough of it.
- Agricultural stakeholders are concerned about the impacts of the Project on the water supply.
- If water contamination led to loss of agricultural production in Southern Alberta, this would have a devastating impact on the livelihood of local residents as well as the economy of Alberta.
- Irrigation adds \$3.6 billion annually to the provincial GDP, including sales and processing. That is 7 times as valuable, compared to dryland farming.
- Every cubic metre of water delivered for irrigation and other related uses generated about \$3.00 to the provincial GDP and \$2.00 in labour income.

### **Unproven water treatment processes**

- Saturated rock fill is an unproven treatment process, which is very concerning.
- It is highly unlikely that all contaminated water will remain at the mine site.
- The assumption that a solution can be developed over the next decade is not reassuring and certainly would be a foolish risk for destroying the headwaters.
- The risk to approve a project knowing these uncertainties is huge and ridiculous, especially when we already are having problems with sufficient water supply to towns, villages, and irrigators.
- Research shows that even with selenium removal, high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus remain which also significantly degrade water quality.
- Albertans are concerned that our headwaters are becoming overly stressed by the ever increasing demands placed on the land and water.

- We are fortunate to have this world renowned Rocky Mountain ecosystem and as the current stewards of this land, it is our responsibility to manage it well for future generations.
- People deserve accurate information on cumulative effects because they are either local or downstream residents.
- There is an estimated stream bank loss of 18,868 square metres on Gold Creek and 402 square metres on Blairmore Creek.
- We do not have the ability to re-create what nature has created over time and reclamation has proven to be very difficult, expensive and at times impossible.
- The Grassy Mountain mine site is located in an area that is very difficult to reclaim because of shallow soils and past reclamation efforts nearby have failed to establish ground cover.

## **Summary**

- The headwaters area is the lifeblood of our mountains. The dry prairies and everyone downstream depend on the Oldman River.
- The Oldman River is the only drinking water source for at least 200,000 people - we have no other options.
- World renowned Rocky Mountain water is the cornerstone of a billion dollar agricultural industry dependent on irrigation.
- Our Eastern Slopes headwaters are already stressed due to clearcut logging and inadequate snowfall and rainfall.
- Many species at risk will be directly impacted, including Westslope Cutthroat trout that is on the brink of disappearing.

In closing I would just ask a simple question. Based on the above information, is it really worth the risk? Please let your government know that this is not in the best interest of Albertans.

Bob Costa