



Western Canada Wilderness Committee



Karvonen Films

Grizzly Bear

PRESERVE OUR MOUNTAIN PARKS
OPPOSE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CHEVIOT MINE

MINE CONSTRUCTION THREATENS THE INTEGRITY OF JASPER NATIONAL PARK

By Gray Jones

Executive Director, WCWC Alberta Branch

Nowhere in Alberta is there a more polarized environmental/economic issue than the issue surrounding the proposed twenty-three kilometre long strip mine for the Mountain Park area, on the Jasper Park boundary. It has boiled down to the classic scenerio of jobs versus the environment.

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It could be argued that the citizens of Hinton, the politicians and proponents supporting the mine are feeding into the well-known 'boom and bust' cycles, which have plagued the other energy industry - the oil and gas industry, for years.

Cardinal River Coals only has a guaranteed three year contract for supplying coal to it's Japanese customers. New technologies and markets coming on line may make Cardinal River Coal's scheme not economically viable for a large part of it's proposed thirty year duration.

New methods of smelting iron have recently been developed that require little or no coking coal, like the product to be mined at CRC's proposed Cheviot Mine. One of these new smelting methods is called the 'pulverized coal injection' or PCI process. In this process much cheaper grades of coal can be used. In the taiga of Siberia, China and Australia there are huge, largely untapped supplies of coal which are coming on line and could be delivered to Japan much cheaper, because of lower wages and transportation costs to Cardinal River Coal's present Japanese customers. There is a distinct possibility that the coal produced by the Cheviot Mine may not be competitive on the world market and that the proposed mine, not being able to compete, may have to close. If the mine is forced to close, the jobs disappear and this could have disastrous effects on the economy and society of Hinton.

This proposed 'boom and bust' industry is not sustainable development. We have to look at alternatives.... Many organizations which track economic trends have predicted by the year 2010, tourism will probably be the world's largest industry. That means that largely pristine and interesting destinations, like Mountain Park will be needed to support future tourist industries.

It has been well publicized that the ecological integrity of our mountain parks, including Jasper are under intense pressure from development and increased tourism. There is a great probability that more grizzlies are dying than being born in Jasper National Park because



Mountain Park

Timber wolf

of train mortalities and increased human pressures on their habitat. Areas surrounding and buffering Jasper, therefore become increasingly important as wildlife corridors, habitats and refuges for species including the wolf, wolverine and the beleaguered grizzly bear. Mountain Park and the area encompassed by Cardinal River Coals is arguably a most important wildlife habitat, refuge and corridor network for Jasper National Park. With increasing numbers of tourists visiting Jasper National Park each year, there is a distinct possibility that tourist numbers may be 'capped' in the future to protect the ecological integrity of the park. That could mean that beautiful Mountain Park, the Cardinal River Divide and surrounding area could support a vibrant



Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep

tourist and eco-tourist industry employing many local people. A sustainable industry which could infinitely outlast the maximum thirty year duration of the proposed mine. In order to have such an industry, the subtle alpine environments, scenery and species diversity must be kept intact. No visitor wants to visit man-made lakes, creek drainages full of rubble and rehabilitated slopes covered in one or two species of non-native grasses. The quality of the area must be preserved through time.

The sensitive area nestled in the rocky Mountain foothills, known as Mountain Park is arguably an eco-museum or living museum. It is a place where natural and human history converge. Mountain Park has become a treasure for many Canadians and an increasing number of international tourists, who participate in hiking, birding, other naturalist activities and horse-back riding in the area.

Mountain Park has become a treasure for many Canadians and international tourists who participate in hiking, birding and horse-back riding in the area.

Mountain Park, with it's web of creeks, rivers and extraordinary alpine, sub-alpine and valley habitats and their associated ecosystems is under immediate threat from the Cardinal River Coal's proposed massive twenty-three kilometre long open pit mining operation - the Cheviot Mine.

The Western Canada Wilderness Committee is well aware of the cultural and historical significance of Mountain Park to generations of Albertans, directly related by family roots to the old town site. This is the human part of the equation and we support their desire to maintain the integrity of the area. *continued on page 3*



STOP THE CHEVIOT



The Cheviot mine will consist of 32 pits each pit being a staggering 1-2 km. wide and 1/2 km. deep.

CRC's own assessment of the mine proposal acknowledges that there will be "unmitigable losses to carnivore habitat."



JASPER NATIONAL PARK

PROPOSED MOUNTAIN PARK AREA

BANFF NATIONAL PARK

FACTS ABOUT THE CHEVIOT MINE

- Cardinal River Coals, [CRC] is "Consolidated Coals" of Pittsburgh and Luscar Ltd. Ex-premiere of Alberta, Peter Lougheed is chairman of Luscar Ltd.
- The Cheviot mine will be a strip mine. Strip mining has been banned in other countries in favour of underground mining, which occurred in Mountain Park in the 1930s and 1940s.
- CRC does not consider underground mining to be economically feasible in the case of the Cheviot mine.
- The reasons for not considering underground mining would seem to be simply that it takes too long and the coal would not be worth enough on the world market by the time it was dug out by underground mining techniques.
- One section of the mine is less than 3 kilometres away from Jasper National Park.
- There will be 32 of these pits dug in a corridor that 23 kilometres long and 3.5 kilometres wide.
- 80 per cent of the rock has to be removed before the coal can be removed.
- The coal being removed is coking coal. The market for coking coal has been steadily declining due to the development of new technologies.
- Australian mines that are currently being developed are much closer to the Asian markets that CRC wishes to sell coal too. The coal from these mines will be also be much less expensive than the coal removed from the Cheviot mine.
- CRC's own assessment of the Cheviot mine proposal acknowledges that there will be "unmitigable losses to carnivore habitat."
- CRC has offered to make money available for regional research but they refuse to say how much money or who will decide how much is necessary to compensate for "unmitigable losses to carnivore habitat."
- CRC own study indicates that reclamation of the land will take 15 to 20 years. This same study also notes that it will 40 to 80 years before the vegetation in the area even resembles existing plant communities.
- In particular Grizzlies are endangered by the Cheviot mine proposal. These are, by government counting techniques, around 800 Grizzlies in Alberta. Most experts put the number at less than 500.

MOUNTAIN

Mountain Park was a small town and coal mining was the reason except for a few cabins and a cemetery. Mountain Park is the town of Jasper National Park. Mountain Park is not a park and a better town rich in history and has a very rich prehistory, the area was extensive. Mountain Park area is also a refugium, that is, an area that was not covered in life existing in the park that has been untouched for over 10,000 years.



- In particular Grizzlies are endangered by the Cheviot mine proposal. There are, by government counting techniques, around 100 Grizzlies in Alberta. Most experts put the number at less than 500.
- The proposed Cheviot Mine immediately east of Jasper National Park would trap a large number of Grizzlies. These trapped Grizzlies become in-bred with the result that their health is severely compromised and their life spans extremely shortened.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MOSSES TO THE ECOSYSTEM

By Dale H. Vitt • Devonian Botanical Garden

Mosses: these small, inconspicuous, and seemingly unimportant plants can, in fact, be dominant parts of the boreal forest and in some ecosystems they are very important - economically (peat moss) and ecologically (feather mosses), controlling water balance, nutrient flow, and acidity. At Mountain Park, they are common and species rich. The area has been reported to be a refugium for plants during at least a part of the last glaciation. This makes the area a rich geological teaching area. But perhaps more importantly, the area hosts a rich assemblage of rare plants. In the Province of Alberta, some of these occur only in the mountain park area; others occur only at 2-3 other places in the province.

One rare moss is known only from one waterfall near Whitehorse Creek and from one other locality in Jasper National Park where it was originally collected in the early 1800's and has not been refound since.

Several other mosses reach their southernmost station in North America at Mountain Park. Although the area has certainly been studied over the years through casual collections and observations, really no one with special-



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Mass disturbance of this area would forever eliminate these critical habitats that no restoration effort can ever replace.



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ized expertise in these plants has done a detailed inventory of the area. So, without a chance to study the area in some detail, we will never know what might be there. Surely other significantly rare species occur in the area and await discovery. Mass disturbance of this area would eliminate these critical habitats that no restoration effort can replace.

If Alberta and Canada is to have any international respect after signing the Rio de Janeiro treaty on endangered species, then how can species known in the country from less than five localities and thus potentially endangered in Canada, be destroyed by such developments as planned here. It is time we upheld our international agreements and set an example for other countries to follow.

Moss often is the first indicator that something is wrong with an ecosystem. As survivors from a time before the last ice age more than 10,000 years ago, they provide special insight into what life might be like back then and they can continue to provide insight into what life is like now. They are necessary.

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Imagine 32 pit



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CHEVIOT MINE!



Large carnivores such as Grizzlies require corridors at least one kilometre in width to travel through developments such as the proposed Cheviot mine.

Cardinal River Coal has refused to consider such corridors in its plan.

Common Sautrage albiziae



Timber wolf

SAVE MOUNTAIN PARK FOR THE FUTURE!

Continued from page 1

Our major concerns about the project are environmental. Within the proposal submitted by CRC there are plans for settling and containment ponds for mine tailings, process chemicals and other effluents.

These proposed installations are not state of the art and represent a very outdated and dangerous technology, which in many parts of the world has been replaced by dewatering the coal which alleviates most needs for settling ponds. The area including and surrounding Mountain Park is subject to flooding during years of high snow pack, precipitation and rapid snow-melt. If these settling ponds do not hold and overflow, water qualities and important fish habitats in the McLeod River and its tributaries could be seriously degraded.

The plan to flood mining pits with water, including one huge pit to be called McLeod Lake, while dumping rock debris into the Thornton Creek and the beautiful Thornton Creek Valley is an abomination.

The fish which will be adversely affected by rock debris in creek drainages and effluent contamination include the only native species of Rainbow trout found

in the area. The enforcement of the Federal Fisheries Act should be of paramount importance to all Albertans.

The currently known vascular flora of the Cardinal Divide area total 277 species. Of these, 35 or 12% of the flora are important because they are either rare (Packer and Bradley, 1984) or geographically significant and usually disjunct (Packer and Vitt, 1974, Mortimer, 1978). An example of four species that are rare and disjunct include *Artemisia borealis*, *Carex misandra*, *Erigeron radicans*, *Lesquerella artica* and *Rhododendron lapponicum*.

The mine only ensures jobs for five to thirty years, at the expense of valuable grizzly and alpine habitats and jobs for our children in a future thriving tourist industry for the Mountain Park area.

Through communications with Dr. John G. Packer, Professor Emeritus, Botany, University of Alberta, we have learned that the entire area encompassed by the proposed mine is full of unique alpine flora that survived the last ice-advance and were not destroyed by glaciation. They are part of a unique and rare refugium and there also is convincing evidence that some insects and arthropods also survived in this area. Dr. Packer states...."This is another reason why this fragile alpine system should not be destroyed in this area and those adjacent. It will however take all of our best efforts to

PARK

of its existence. There is little left of the town now that often used to describe the entire area east of it might be the Mountain Park area. It is a region, mostly settled by First Nations peoples. The Mountain was built by ice in the last ice age. This means that there





s like this...

clude the only native species of Rainbow trout found in tributaries in the area, the Athabasca Rainbow trout, (found only in the Athabasca drainage, in the whole world) and the endangered Bull trout. Protection of these rare fish species, their habitats and absolute en-

stop the mine. If the mine goes ahead it only destroys jobs for five to thirty years, at the expense of valuable grizzly and alpine habitats and jobs for our children in a future thriving tourist industry for the Mountain Park area.

Allison Dirwood



Golden Mantled Ground Squirrel



Karvonen Films

Sunset



Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep - Karvonen Films



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Grizzly Bear

TIME TO CHOOSE...



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Grizzly Bear

GRIZZLY HABITAT OR



INDUSTRIAL SLAG HEAP?

ICWC File Photo

Let your Letters Express your Concern!

Let your letters, faxes and phone calls express your concern.

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Yes!

**I WILL SUPPORT WCWC'S EFFORTS TO SAVE OUR MOUNTAIN PARKS AND
STOP THE CHEVIOT MINE!**

*Thanks,
Nick*

- Make me a member of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee for \$30 a year.
- Here is my tax deductible donation of: ___\$30 ___\$50 ___\$100 ___\$200 ___other

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