



**WEST COUNTRY
SUSTAINABILITY COALITION**
PASSIONATE PEOPLE STANDING UP FOR A BETTER WEST COUNTRY

November 21, 2022

The Honorable Danielle Smith

Office of the Premier
307 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Avenue NW
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6

Dear Premier Smith,

We are writing to you on behalf of the West Country Sustainability Coalition (WCSC). The WCSC is a voluntary group of Clearwater County, Rocky Mountain House and Nordegg residents, recreation users, businesses and organizations working together towards a healthy West Country – the beautiful public lands of Clearwater County – free of coal mining.

Our members are united in the view that the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains are no place for new coal mines – a perspective that is shared by a large majority of Albertans who provided feedback to the Government of Alberta’s coal policy engagement process as well as public opinion surveys. Clearwater County holds the majority of all Category 2 coal leases in Alberta. There have been two new coal mines proposed in the area alongside over 100,000 hectares of additional coal leases that were acquired during the short eight months that the Coal Policy was rescinded by the Government of Alberta.

The West Country Sustainability Coalition is deeply concerned for the future of Alberta’s watersheds should new coal mines go forward. Countless presentations were made to the Government of Alberta’s appointed Coal Policy Committee by concerned and well-informed Albertans about the multitude of implications and risks associated with coal mining on the eastern slopes of Alberta’s Rocky Mountains.

The Coal Policy Committee heard, loud and clear, the very real dangers that coal mining activities present on the eastern slopes. Coal mining threatens clean water, wildlife, human health, and economic opportunities to provide tourism and recreation. Additionally, the reclamation, remediation and long-term monitoring costs often remain long after the coal mine closes, leaving the burden of restoration to taxpayers.

We welcomed the announcement of a Ministerial Order in March 2022 that temporarily halted exploration and development activities for all Category 2, 3 and 4 lands. However, this decision does not address all the failures in decision-making after the hasty rescission of the Coal Policy in 2020.

We are requesting that you immediately cancel all coal leases that were granted after the rescission of the Coal Policy in 2020 and commit to no new coal mines being developed along Alberta’s eastern slopes.

We urge you to implement the recommendations made in [A Coal Policy for Alberta - 2022 and Beyond](#):

- No new coal exploration and no new coal mines.
- Assess adequacy of the current mine financial security program.
- Ensure timely and effective remediation of lands disturbed by coal exploration and mining activities.



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Albertans across the province have made it clear that coal mining is inappropriate on the eastern slopes. We look forward to your response, including a formal commitment to the protection of these areas from new coal mine development and a commitment to cancel current coal leases in this region to support future planning that will support recreation, conservation, and sustainable tourism development.

Thank you for your time in this important matter.

Sincerely,

Vance Buchwald Fisheries Biologist (ret.), B.Sc.
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cc:

Honorable Pete Guthrie, Minister of Energy (minister.energy@gov.ab.ca)

Honorable Sonya Savage, Minister of Environment and Protected Areas (aep.minister@gov.ab.ca)

Honorable Todd Loewen, Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism (fpt.minister@gov.ab.ca)