



AN OPEN LETTER FROM COALWATCH COMOX VALLEY SOCIETY FEBRUARY 25, 2011

Over the last 14 months, during which CoalWatch has been identifying and researching issues regarding the proposed Raven Coal Mine Project, it has become abundantly clear that there is a potential for significant widespread environmental effects from the project and that there is widespread public concern about the project.

The concerns about water and the aquifers in the area impacted by the proposed mine have been one of the key issues identified by Coalwatch during our research. The fact that the aquifers in the region surrounding the Raven Coal Mine Project have not been adequately mapped and have been classified in a study by VIU as “vulnerable” is very troubling. CoalWatch has been consistent in our request that the mapping and modeling of the aquifers in the entire region affected by the Raven Project be completed at the beginning of the environmental assessment process rather than at the end of the process. It’s just common sense to have all the aquifer mapping and modeling data completed at the beginning of the decision making process.

The other numerous issues and concerns regarding the Raven Coal Mine Project should also be addressed in the most rigorous environmental assessment available, a joint federal/provincial independent expert Review Panel with Public Hearings. The current “comprehensive review” is in our opinion, inadequate. An independent expert Review Panel would include Public Hearings rather than Public Meetings, and afford the opportunity of cross examination of outside witnesses. The Review Panel would also be at arm’s length from the government, it’s more transparent, and more likely to result in findings of environmental impacts.

CoalWatch has repeatedly asked both the Federal and Provincial governments to support our position on the aquifer mapping and modeling; and that the environmental assessment of the proposed Raven Coal Mine Project be referred to a joint federal/provincial independent expert review

panel with public hearings. Given the magnitude of this project, it is both regrettable and amazing that in all cases these requests for support have been denied.

The full impact of this proposed coal mine cannot be adequately known without an environmental assessment by an independent review panel; and comprehensive aquifer mapping and modeling of the entire area impacted by this mine. Numerous citizens, environmental groups, and relevant local governments are also on record as supporting our requests. The residents of the Comox Valley, Port Alberni Valley, and all the residents of Vancouver Island deserve nothing less than the most rigorous environmental assessment available.

Given that both the CEAA and BCEAO, in our opinion, are refusing to exercise due diligence regarding the environmental assessment of the Raven Coal Mine Project, the Officers and Directors of CoalWatch Comox Valley Society have voted unanimously to oppose the Raven Coal Mine Project, and that our public messaging regarding the project shall reflect this opposition.

Notwithstanding the above, CoalWatch will continue to identify and research the issues surrounding the Raven Project and to advocate for a robust public participation during the entire environmental assessment process; and CoalWatch will also continue to be an active participant in that environmental assessment process.

On behalf of the Officers and Directors of CoalWatch Comox Valley Society,

John Snyder
President, CoalWatch Comox Valley Society