

New coal mines in the Comox Valley? Now is the time to speak out

The proposal for a massive coal mine in the hills above Fanny Bay is now open for public comment as part of the federal environmental assessment. You have until September 20th to submit your comments and concerns about the proposed Raven Mine to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency in this first public comment period.

The Raven proposal is the first of at least two coal mines planned in the Comox Valley by Comox Joint Venure, a company owned by Compliance Coal and Asian investors.

A second mine, the Bear, would come on line later. It would be an open pit mine closer to Union Bay and the Trent River, and would truck millions of tonnes of coal back to the Fanny Bay site for washing, grinding, and processing.

What's at stake?

Most importantly, it's about the water.

The mine and its environmental assessment are proceeding without any comprehensive aquifer mapping or water modelling of the affected watersheds. We don't know how the water which will be disturbed by the mine will interact with the aquifers which serve the Fanny Bay area, or the wells, stormwater, or streams. All levels of regional government have called for comprehensive independent aquifer and hydrology mapping before the environmental assessment begins.

About the mine

The Raven Mine would cover 200 hectares above ground, but most of it will be below ground. It would remove 44 million tonnes of rock from seams of coal underground, stretching from Fanny Bay to north of the Tsable River, from the surface to a depth of at least 450 metres. If the coal seams are removed, the earth will subside over the 3100 acres of the underground workings.



The mine hopes to truck 1.5 million tonnes of coal a year for 20 years the 80 kilometres on existing highways to Port Alberni, for storage and shipment to Asia. A pile of waste rock of at least 10 million cubic metres (between 14 and 28 million tonnes), will be left behind at the mine site.

Make sure your voice is heard

The deadline is September 20th, 2010, for the first stage of public comment the federal environmental assessment. If you comment now, the government has to report how they responded to your concern.



With so much at stake, CoalWatch is calling for:

- A joint federal/provincial independent expert review panel with full public hearings – the most rigorous form of environmental assessment available
- Comprehensive mapping and modeling of aquifers in the region before any further consideration is given to the mine proposal

To support this call, and to express your own concerns, send comments to:

Andrew Rollo, Project Manager,
Canadian Environmental Assessment
Agency (CEAA)
805-1550 Alberni Street,
Vancouver, BC V6G 1A5
Telephone: 604-666-2458
Fax: 604-666-3493
Email: Raven@ceaa-acee.gc.ca

Title your submission:

Re: Raven Underground Coal Mine
Project CEAR#10-03-55529

There will also be a provincial environmental assessment that will likely open up public comments and hold public meetings this fall.

Stay connected: CoalWatch Comox Valley is a citizens group that formed in November, 2009, in response to the propped mine. For more details about the mine, and to find out about public meetings and other developments, sign up for CoalWatch Alert on our website.

Other health, environment, & economic risks to our community:

- **Acid mine drainage** can come from the waste rock and continue for years, ruining any water it comes in contact with, and killing fish. Once it starts, it is impossible to reverse and costs millions of dollars to treat.
- **Fish and wildlife habitat:** The mine will destroy parts of Cowie Creek which is fish habitat. At risk also is habitat of vulnerable species, including salmon, the Western Toad and Red-legged Frog (species of “special concern” under the Federal Species at Risk Act), as well as BC red-and blue-listed species such as Roosevelt Elk, Coastal Cutthroat Trout, Water Shrew, Purple Martin, Band-tailed Pigeon, and Pacific Sideband Snail.
- **Jobs:** Hundreds of jobs in the shellfish industry are at risk if heavy metals from the mine get into Baynes Sound. Resort, fishing, tourism, construction, and real estate jobs are also at risk if the coal mines change the economic positioning of the valley as a recreation and retirement haven.
- **Coal dust:** Mining, loading, transporting, and storing coal have caused serious dust problems in other coalmines – dust which contaminates the air, creates visual pollution, increases lung disease, and lowers property values.
- **Traffic:** The mine will operate 24 hours a day, and require a loaded truck every 15 minutes for the next 20 years to haul the coal to Port Alberni.
- **Climate change** is directly linked to burning coal. Even though the coal will be used in China, its green house effect will be felt around the world. Coal mining also releases methane which is an even stronger greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide.
- **Who is left to clean up?** In the case of an accident, or when the mine closes, how can we be sure that taxpayers won't be stuck with the multi-million dollar clean-up bill, as happened with the impact of the Mt. Washington copper mine on the Tsolum River?