

Conservancy Hornby Island - Hornby Island, British Columbia



CHI, Box 55, Hornby Island, B.C. V0R 1Z0

June 20, 2011

To: The Honourable Christy Clark
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C.

Re: Compliance Coal proposed mine site near Buckley Bay on Vancouver Island

Dear Ms. Clark

We are writing to voice our concern for the proposed coal mine near Buckley Bay on Vancouver Island. Conservancy Hornby Island is located within the Comox Valley Regional District and provides representation on conservation and environmental issues to approximately 1000 people who live on Hornby Island. The vast majority of Hornby Islanders object to a mine in an area we believe to be very unsuitable for coal mining and question why such a project even got this far in the environmental review process given that the Comox valley growing economy relies on forestry, agriculture, tourism, fisheries and a world renowned oysters/ shellfish growing area.

We recognize the value of coal to the economy of the province but believe there are large areas in the north and south eastern parts of the province much better suited to coal mining. These mining areas have the resource base to expand and the mining and

transportation infrastructure in place, while they also support established mining communities such as Tumbler Ridge, Sparwood, Elkford and Fernie.

In our submission to the Environmental Assessment Authority we concentrated on the critical natural resource that our area depends on – water. While this is a very complex topic we will concentrate on two aspects of the water issue. The first is how Compliance Coal may adversely affect the upland water flowing off the Beaufort Range on the eastern Vancouver Island into the rivers, creeks, and aquifers in the area. The second is how the potential leachate from the mine may affect the important shellfish industry and ocean environment in Baynes Sound and the waters around Denman and Hornby Islands.

With respect to the first issue, it is well known that both iron pyrites and heavy metals, such as arsenic and selenium, are associated with coal deposits. When iron pyrites (ferrous sulphite) is brought to the surface it oxidizes, producing iron, hydrogen sulphide, and sulphuric acid. The hydrogen sulphide and the sulphuric acid increase the acidity of ground water acid with a resultant deleterious effect on waters draining into aquifers and into streams. All of the creeks and rivers near the proposed mine site contain three species of coho, chum and pink salmon as well and trout. In the last 50 years we have experienced a loss of fish habitat on eastern Vancouver Island and a well documented reduction in salmon stocks. This mine could exacerbate an already critical loss in salmon habitat.

On the second issue, the release of heavy metals may have even more serious consequences. The streams traversing the mine area drain directly into Baynes Sound. The release of heavy metals could have a major negative impact on the Sound's extensive shellfish industry. Permitting a coal mine a few short miles up- river from these world class sustainable aqua farms is extremely risky.

Therefore, in conclusion, we ask the Environmental Assessment Authority to seriously consider the potential impacts of a coal mine so near to the fish bearing streams that contain important salmon and trout habitat and flow into the ocean of Baynes Sound that support our seafood industry. The Hornby Island Conservancy does not believe that a coal mine is compatible with the mode of life practiced in the surrounding community nor is it sustainable in this area.

Yours truly;

Chairperson, Hornby Island Conservancy

Cc Don McCrea MLA
Comox Valley Regional District Board
Environmental Assessment Authority