Natural Resources Canada | Ressources naturelles Canada

May 26, 2021
CIAR File No.: 80731

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Subject: Natural Resources Canada's Submission of the Federal Authority Advice Record for the proposed Phase I Vista Test Underground Mine and Vista Mine Phase II Expansion Projects

On May 6, 2021, the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) requested that Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) complete a Federal Authority Advice Record (FAAR) for the proposed Phase I Vista Test Underground Mine and Vista Mine Phase II Expansion Projects (the Projects) by Coalspur Mines (Operations) Ltd.

NRCan has reviewed the proponent's Initial Project Description based on the Department's requirements pursuant to subsection 13(1) of the *Impact Assessment Act*. Please find attached NRCan's submission of the FAAR, which provides the departmental responsibilities and expertise related to the Projects to help inform the Agency's preparation of the Summary of Issues.

NRCan requests that the proponent provide information on socioeconomic, forestry, geohazards, groundwater and mine waste impacts related to the Projects in their Detailed Project Description to assist in informing the development of Tailored Impact Statement Guidelines.

If you have any questions, please contact me via e-mail at Anica.Madzarevic@canada.ca.

Kind Regards,

<original signed by>
Anica Madzarevic
Impact Assessment Officer
Office of the Chief Scientist

Attachment:
Federal Authority Advice Record

Canada

ATTACHMENT: Federal Authority Advice Record
Response due by May 26, 2021
Coalspur Mines Ltd. – Phase I Vista Test Underground Mine and Vista Mine Phase II Expansion Projects
Registry number: 80731

Department/Agency	Natural Resources Canada
Lead IA Contact	Anica Madzarevic
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1. Is it probable that your department or agency may be required to exercise a power or perform a duty or function related to the Projects to enable it to proceed?

Based on the Initial Project Description (IPD), it is unlikely that Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) will be required to exercise a power or perform a duty or function related to the Projects to enable it to proceed.

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2. Is your department or agency in possession of specialist or expert information or knowledge that may be relevant to the conduct of an impact assessment of the Projects?

Specify as appropriate.

NRCan possesses the following specialist or expert information or knowledge that may be relevant to the conduct of an impact assessment of the Projects:

Socioeconomic Analysis of Mining
- Socioeconomic impacts of mining projects

Forestry
- Hydrology in forested areas
- Biodiversity (including forest vegetation and species at risk)
- Forested land use and reclamation
- Forest soils (e.g. quality, loss, compaction, erosion, productivity etc.)
- Socio-economic impacts linked to forestry
- Cumulative effects of multiple anthropogenic disturbances on the forested landscape

Mine Waste
- Characterization of waste rock and tailings required to determine the likelihood of acid mine drainage and neutral drainage from this mine material
- Contaminant transport in aquatic ecosystems required to predict water and sediment quality

- Assessment of the toxicity of metals and metalloids (including selenium) from contaminant presence in water and sediments
- Mining effluent treatment

Earth Sciences

- Groundwater and physical hydrogeology (flow, recharge, chemistry, and aquifer delineation)
- Slope stability
- Geohazards including earthquakes/seismicity, and terrain hazards

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3. Has your department or agency considered the Projects; exercised a power or performed a duty or function under any Act of Parliament in relation to the Projects; or taken any course of action that would allow the Projects to proceed in whole or in part?

No

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4. Has your department or agency had previous contact or involvement with the proponent or other party in relation to the Projects? (for example, enquiry about methodology, guidance, or data; introduction to the project)

No

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5. Does your department or agency have additional information or knowledge not specified, above?

No

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6. From the perspective of the mandate and area(s) of expertise of your department or agency, what are the issues that should be addressed in the impact assessment of the Projects, should the Agency determine that an impact assessment is required?

For each issue discussed, provide a concise, plain-language summary that is appropriate for inclusion in the Summary of Issues.

Based on NRCan's areas of expertise, the issues that should be addressed in an impact assessment of the Projects, if required, include the following:

Socioeconomic Analysis of Mining

- Employment opportunities - Information on employment opportunities and requirements created by the Projects, including details on plans for acquiring employees, impacts to local communities, planning for training and skills development, etc.
- Socioeconomic structures - Impacts to socioeconomic structures of nearby communities from potential increased employment requirements, including details on potential impacts to cost of living, local populations, structures of the local economy, emergency services, traffic, noise, barter and sustenance economics/activities, etc.
- Local hiring and procurement - Details relating to local hiring and local procurement, including diversity and inclusion in hiring and training practices
- Government revenues - Analysis of government revenues, including taxation, royalties, carbon pricing and other sources
- Commodity market - Analysis of the commodity market, including forecasts, and the cost of the operation
- Post-mine - Details on how the company will work to ensure that opportunities remain and that the community is in a better position once the project has been completed

Forestry

- Hydrology in forested areas - Potential impacts of mine expansion on the hydrology of surrounding watersheds (e.g. wetlands, surface water) and description of mitigation measures
- Forest vegetation and biodiversity - Potential changes in soil quality, loss, compaction, erosion and other factors that could result in reduced soil productivity. The methods used for tree clearing and potential impacts on biodiversity, species at risk and species with cultural values should be described. Based on this link to a map by the Alberta government, https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/932d6c22-a32a-4b4e-a3f5-cb2703c53280/resource/8335d979-394e-4959-ac5c-014dc2106df9/download/albertacaribouranges-map-nov2017.pdf, the Projects are adjacent to the Little Smoky Boreal Range and the A La Peche Mountain Caribou Range.

- Forested land use change – Potential impacts to land use change by the mine expansion, impacts to other components from land use change and identification of mitigation measures
- Forested land reclamation – Proponent should describe how forested land impacted by the mine expansion will be reclaimed in the future

Earth Sciences

- Seismic hazards - Risk of seismic hazard and landslides through a seismic hazard assessment and landslides/slope stability assessment, as it relates to the project activities
- Groundwater impacts - Based on the presence of groundwater management systems mentioned in the IPD, all groundwater and surface water effects related to groundwater removal such as groundwater drawdown and loss of streamflow to groundwater are of interest. Water diversions have the potential to influence groundwater and surface water flows and groundwater-surface water interactions. These project activities and their potential effects on related groundwater and surface water flows have the potential to influence fish and fish habitat.

Mine Waste

- Tailings and waste rock management - The IPD indicates that tailings and waste rock will be backfilled in open pits and underground workings during operations and will be covered with soil and vegetation. While this is common practice, is there an issue with space availability in Macpherson pit to accommodate all the material?
- Concentration of elements - Potential for impacts from elevated concentrations of sulphur minerals, nitrogen species from blasting, salinity, trace elements and other geochemical species of potential concern, given that thermal coal mines produce a number of different geologic materials
- Contamination - Whether segregation of waste rock is conducted in a manner to reduce contamination of water, as coal mine deposits are often a source of selenium. Selenium and other contaminants can be harmful to aquatic insects and lead to impacts to fish and birds that feed on these insects. There may be risk of impacts to the two endangered species mentioned in the IPD, namely Bull trout and the Athabasca Rainbow Trout, and also to the 45 endangered bird species found locally.
- Baseline water and sediment quality - The detailed project description should provide concentrations of contaminants of potential concern, baseline water and sediment quality data and information on planned mitigation measures, and their effectiveness, in reducing water and sediment contamination.

Anica Madzarevic
Name of Departmental / Agency Responder

Impact Assessment Officer
Title of Responder

May 26, 2021
Date