

Appendix 19-B

Summary of Land Use and Access
Survey

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to summarize the results of NWP's "Getting to Know About Land Use and Access" Survey. In March of 2021, NWP launched a survey to further understand recreational land uses near the proposed Crown Mountain Coking Coal Project (the Project). The objective of this survey was to solicit feedback related to land use activities (e.g., hunting, fishing, motorized use, non-motorized use, and other recreational activities) that currently occur within the Project area, perceptions on potential Project-related effects to these activities, and suggestions on how to mitigate potential effects. The results of this survey have informed the Land Use Assessment for the Crown Mountain Coking Coal Project. NWP also intends to use feedback received to inform their plans for future community engagement.

Methodology

The survey was developed and administered using the on-line Survey Monkey platform. Its availability was posted on Facebook, LinkedIn, and emailed directly to key interest groups. The survey was launched on March 4, 2021 and is expected to remain open until the end of June 2021. Information included in the Land Use Assessment is limited to the results from March 4 to March 24, 2021, which are summarized in this report.

A copy of the survey questions is included as Attachment A. The first series of questions included in the survey were related to understanding more about the survey respondents. For example, where are they from, where they live, self-identification with groups (e.g., outdoors person, coal miner (or someone who works in the coal industry), member of an environmental group, Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, or Metis), etc.), and affiliation with any local clubs or organizations. In addition, this section of the survey asked high-level questions related to what activities respondents did in the Project area (e.g., general recreation, hunting, hiking, camping, fishing, ATV riding, off-road truck trails, snowmobiling, berry collection, traditional or ceremonial uses, other, or none).

Respondents then had the option to continue and answer more detailed questions about recreational land uses in the Project area or end the survey. The second portion of the survey included questions related to specific activities in the area; these activities were grouped as follows:

- Hunting;
- Fishing;
- ATV riding;
- Snowmobiling; and
- Non-motorized uses.

The questions were related to extent of use, specific areas of use, value of the Project area for the specific activity, potential Project impacts on the activity, opportunities for NWP could reduce potential Project-related impacts previously identified, and any additional comments. In addition, questions under the hunting and fishing categories included questions related to types of species harvested.

Key Findings

The findings of the NWP's *Getting to Know About Land Use and Access Survey* are summarized in the following section. The full survey results from March 4 to March 24, 2021 are provided in Attachment A.

A total of 138 respondents participated in the survey. The majority of respondents were from local communities, including Sparwood (45%), Elkford (30%), and rural area near Sparwood (15%). Many respondents were affiliated with a club or organization, (e.g. Sparwood Fish and Wildlife Association (51%), Elkford Rod and Gun Club (26%), Elk Valley Mountaineers (20%)). In addition, the majority of the respondents identified as outdoors person and / or coal miner (or someone working in the coal mining industry). Other respondents included: members of an environmental or conservation organization, Indigenous, and / or regulatory or government agency.

It is important to consider the characteristics of the survey respondents in order to situate the findings of the survey. For example, due to the fact that the majority of the respondents were affiliated with the Sparwood Fish and Wildlife Association or the Elkford Rod and Gun Club, it is not surprising that numerous detailed written responses related to hunting in the Project area were provided.

Figure 1 summarizes the results from the survey related to the following question (question 7): *Do you do any of the following activities near the Project?* This question allowed respondents to select all activities that apply. Activities identified to occur near the Project include: general recreation, hunting, hiking, camping, fishing, ATV riding, off road truck use, snowmobiling, berry collection, horseback riding, traditional and ceremonial uses. In addition, other activities identified by respondents included: historical artifact finding, trapping, swimming at Grave Lake, cross-country skiing, and dog walking / running. The top three activities are: General Recreation, Hunting and Hiking.

Q7 Do you do any of the following activities near the project (choose all that apply)? Note: This can be something you do as part of a club or organization or something you do with family, friends, or on your own.

Answered: 115 Skipped: 23

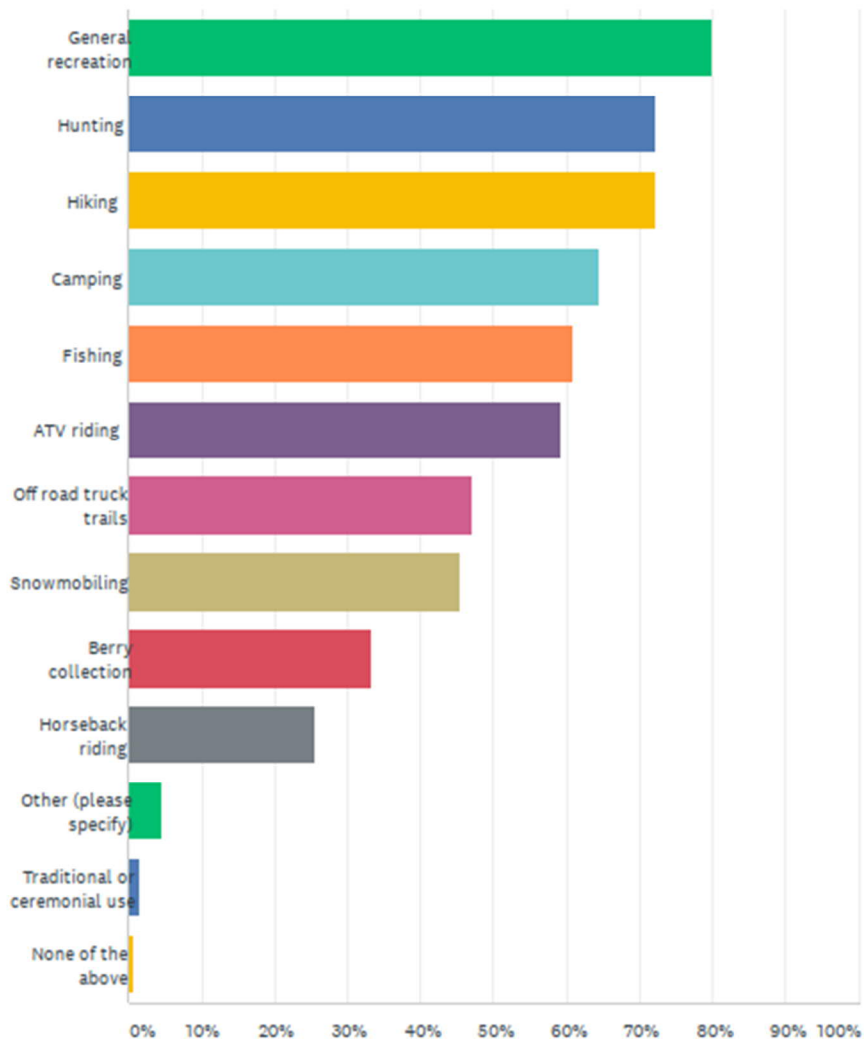


Figure 1: Summary of Survey Responses to Question 7

Findings from the survey suggest that there is some opposition to the Project, in part, due to the removal of lands used for recreational purposes and changes to access to areas used for recreational activities. While the survey did not include questions specifically related to whether or not respondents supported or opposed the Project, many respondents noted that they did not want the Project to be approved or developed. In general, these comments were in response to the following activity specific, including hunting and ATVing, questions: what could NWP do to reduce potential impacts and is there anything else that you feel that NWP should know. In addition, the end of the survey also provided an opportunity for respondents to provide additional comments and questions. In this section, respondents also reiterated that they did not want the Project to be approved or developed.

Potential environmental disturbances (e.g. land disturbance, impacts on wildlife and water quality, etc.) and nuisance effects (e.g. dust, noise, air quality, visual quality, etc.) were also cited as reasons for not approving and developing the Project. Respondents also indicated that other mining and development has occurred in the Elk Valley, and noted that the Project area is one of the few areas they can use for recreational purposes.

The following sections provide a more detailed summary of the comments provided related to the specific land use activities.

Hunting

The survey received the most written responses for hunting activities (between 35 and 58 respondents provided written feedback about hunting depending on the question). The following highlights the key issues/themes raised:

- The Project area was identified as a highly valued for hunting, particularly by local residents from Sparwood. In addition, some respondents noted that people from elsewhere in BC come to the area for hunting purposes.
- The Project area was also described as frequently used for hunting activities; responses ranged from 10 to 30 days during hunting seasons.
- The Project area was described as highly valued and popular in comparison to other areas due to the history of use and the variety of species that reside in the area. In addition, due to ongoing development within the Elk Valley, respondents described the Project area as one of the few undeveloped, undisturbed, and accessible hunting areas in the Elk Valley.
- Key big games species hunted in the Project area include: bighorn mountain sheep, elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, mountain goat, black bear, wolf, and moose.

Potential impacts to hunting identified by respondents include:

- Project-related restrictions will affect access to areas used for hunting (e.g. Grave Creek FSR / Rock Teepee trail, north end of Alexander Creek, back side of ram mountain, etc.).
- The Project would result in further restrictions to areas used for hunting and recreation within an area where use is already limited. Respondents noted that the Project is located within an area where access and use are already limited due to unauthorized access areas surrounding other mine sites and access management areas.
- The Project would result in the removal and disturbance of lands frequently used for hunting activities.

- Concerns that Project-related unauthorized access areas will extend beyond the Project footprint.
- Concerns that the Project could change the distribution of species hunted (e.g. alter migration patterns, wildlife on roadways, traffic displacing wildlife, changes to connectivity corridors, water quality, etc.), which could affect the quality of hunting in the area.
- Expectations that the Project could result in nuisance effects (e.g., dust, noise, visual and sensory quality, etc.).
- People visit the Elk Valley to go hunting, and they spend money in local communities. The Project area is one of the areas that is open for hunting, and could reduce the number of hunters attracted to the area.

Overall, with respect to hunting impacts, respondents felt that there are very few mitigation measures can be applied to reduce the potential impacts. However, some respondents recommended the following: maintain access; protect areas for hunting, wildlife and recreation; and conduct wildlife movement studies and preserve wildlife corridors.

Fishing

Three respondents answered survey questions related to fish harvesting, while six noted that they do fish in the area. The majority of these respondents (75%) noted that they do not fish in the area. Comments related to fishing are summarized below:

- Anticipation that the Project will remove opportunities to fish in the Project area. Numerous creeks are fished in near the Project area as well as the Elk River.
- Species harvested include trout, cutthroat trout, and rainbow trout.
- Concerns that the Project could change access to areas used for fishing, alter the water quality in the Elk River, and possibly change access to Grave Lake.
- Species harvested include trout, cutthroat trout, and rainbow trout.
- Concerns that the Project would affect the fish populations in the area due to declining health and abundance due to other coal mining in the area.

ATVing

Five respondents noted that they go ATVing in the Project area. The majority of respondents noted that the area was considered to be the same as others in the Elk Valley for ATVing. It was also noted that the Project area was used for off-road truck and adventure motorcycle activities. Potential impacts to ATVing cited by respondents include:

- The Project could further restrict use of an area that is already restricted (i.e. Alexander Creek Access Management Area (AMA)). In addition, with the loss of areas used for ATVing, users would be forced to use other areas, which may increase conflict.
- Concerned that the Project could result in the loss of northern access to the Alexander Creek AMA.

Mitigation measures suggested include: maintain public use of Forest Service Roads; create, manage and maintain off-road recreation for off-road vehicles.

Snowmobiling

Only one respondent noted that they snowmobile in the Project area. Crown Mountain, particularly the northern half, has been identified as a frequently used and highly valued snowmobiling area by local residents. It was described as the primary snowmobiling area used by Sparwood residents. Use of this area has recently increased due to the plowing of the Grave Creek access road and providing a staging area. The snowmobiling in this area has been described as less crowded compared to other areas such as Corbin, Morrissey or Coal Creek. Southern access to the Alexander Creek AMA for snowmobiling has been described as less preferred due to the quality of riding and the quantity of riders.

Potential Project-related impacts noted by respondent include changes in use of the Elk Valley Mountaineers Cabin and access to Northern Alexander Creek area for snowmobiling activities.

Non-Motorized Users

Seven respondents noted that they use the Project area for non-motorized uses. In general, the value of this area was identified as similar to other areas for non-motorized uses. Areas used for non-motorized activities (e.g., campsites, picnic sites, trails, etc.) include: Grave Creek, Grave Lake, random sites on old logging roads, West Alexander. Project-related impacts to non-motorized users identified by survey respondents include the removal of hiking in the West Alexander Creek area. Trails near Grave Creek were also identified as an area used for non-motorized activities.

Other Comments

Survey respondents noted that with the removal of lands due to Project activities, land users will be forced into other areas, which could increase the number of users in other areas and lead to damage of land and wildlife disturbance. In addition, the removal of lands for recreational purpose can also increase conflict between various land users (e.g. hikers, campers, ATV users, etc.).

Concerns related to the Project's overlap with Teck's proposed conservation lands were expressed. In addition, respondents noted that

Summary

The results of this survey provide valuable information that will inform the Land Use Assessment for the Crown Mountain Coking Coal Project. The survey findings indicate that the Project area is used and valued for recreational activities, particularly by Elkford and Sparwood residents. In addition, due to experience with other projects in the area, respondents were concerned about Project-related access restrictions; one key mitigation measure suggested was to maintain access, when possible.

While findings provide greater insight into certain activities (e.g. hunting) compared to others (e.g. snowmobiling), the results of the survey have been considered qualitatively and represent one source of information utilized for the Land Use Assessment.

NWP also intends to use the information received to inform their future community engagement activities.