

A coal mine in the beautiful Bulkley Valley?

What you need to know about Telkwa Coal

AT A GLANCE

Bathurst Resources, a company from New Zealand wants to build an open-pit coal mine seven kilometres from Telkwa. The B.C. government could approve it as soon as this winter.

The mine will disturb a 1,000-hectare (10 square kilometre) area and pose risks to water, fish and caribou habitat.

Coal mining is a notoriously dirty industry, linked to air and water pollution, climate change, and harm to human health.

Dumping untreated mine water into local creeks

- Unlike other coal mines in B.C., the company has chosen not to treat contaminated water from the mine. Instead, it plans to release the untreated contaminated water into fish-bearing Goathorn Creek and rely on dilution alone. This approach goes against B.C. government's guidelines, which require treatment technology before relying on dilution.
- Mine-contaminated water will seep into groundwater, and then into Tenas, Goathorn, and Four Creeks. This seepage will continue for decades after the mine closes.
- In the company's worst-case scenario, the proposed mine will exceed water quality guidelines for selenium, nitrite, and cobalt. However, external reviewers say mine pollution in creeks and private wells could be orders of magnitude worse than the company predicts. Contaminated seepage could even travel as far as the Telkwa River.
- The company is planning almost no mitigation of mine seepage. Mine seepage poses a long-term environmental risk with no clear plan to control it.

SkeenaWild

The risk of dam failure

- The mine would use a series of dams to contain contaminated mine waste. The consequences of a catastrophic dam failure would be high. The company has stated a catastrophic dam failure could put up to 200 people at risk.
- The mine's flawed design includes cascading dams, which The UN Environment Programme strongly discourages because upper dam failure can trigger failure of lower dams, increasing the consequences.

Coal mine pollution harms fish

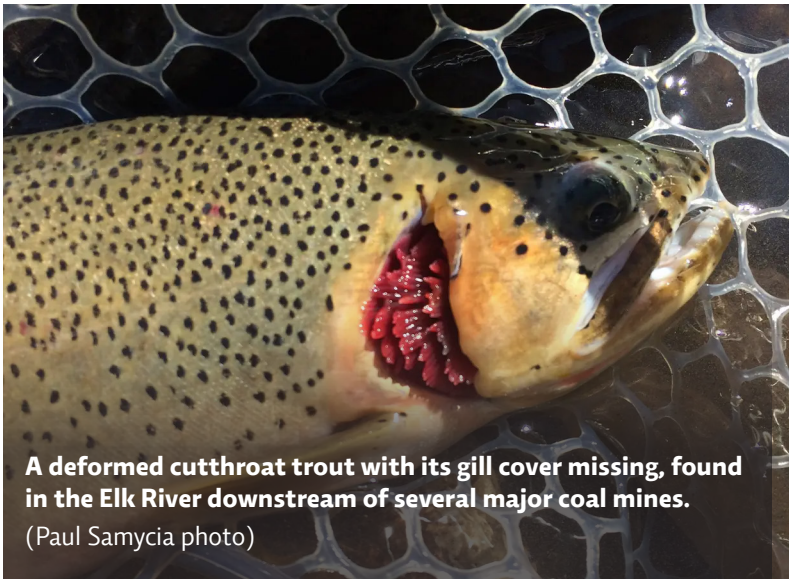
- Contaminants such as selenium, nitrite and cobalt are known to harm fish.
- There are records of bull trout, a species of conservation concern, in streams around the proposed mine site. Bull trout are sensitive to habitat fragmentation and water pollution, yet the company has not specifically assessed the mine's impacts on bull trout.

What happens after it closes?

- The quality of water discharged by the mine is predicted to worsen after mine closure.
- Because the project's current economics are marginal, the company may not be able to afford necessary fixes in the future.
- Longer term, the release of contaminated water into groundwater and creeks will continue for many decades.

Is it really steelmaking coal?

- The company claims coal from its proposed mine in Telkwa will be used for steelmaking. But when the company Manalta wanted to build a coal mine in Telkwa in the late 90s, its geological assessment stated: "...the primary value of Telkwa coal is as a thermal product."
- Once it is mined, there is nothing preventing the company from selling coal overseas to be burned for power. Thermal coal is among the dirtiest fuels on the planet and is associated with severe air pollution, human health impacts, and climate change.



A deformed cutthroat trout with its gill cover missing, found in the Elk River downstream of several major coal mines.
(Paul Samycia photo)

ACT NOW:

Submit your comments on Telkwa Coal to the Environmental Assessment Office.

Scan the QR code to visit the site.

I'm concerned. What can I do?

- **Attend local events**
  The BC Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) and the company will be co-hosting open houses on December 2 in Witset and December 3 in Telkwa. Details will be published here: *https://engage.eao.gov.bc.ca/Tenas-EA*

  What Matters in Our Valley is hosting a community forum in Witset on Sunday, November 22 from 2:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m.
- **Submit comments to the B.C. government**
  The EAO's final 30-day public comment period runs November 17 to December 16, 2026. It is critical that concerned residents submit comments to this process. See QR code at left.
- **Voice your concerns to local governments**
  Write to your local mayors, councillors and Regional District representatives. Tell them you don't support an open-pit coal mine in the Bulkley Valley.