

Coalspur Mines Limited's Community Readiness Program

Context

Coalspur Mines Limited is a thermal coal development company with approximately 55 000 hectares of leases located within the Hinton region of Alberta, Canada. Vista, located approximately 280 km west of Edmonton, is Coalspur's flagship project and has the potential to be developed into the largest export thermal coal mine in North America. This large-scale, surface-mineable, thermal coal project covers approximately 10 000 hectares.

Pre-exploration	Exploration	Development	Operation	Closure	Post-closure
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Lead: Industry (Alta.)

Step of the Mineral Development Sequence: Development

Key Finding: Sustaining relationships with affected communities and other stakeholders throughout the life of its operations – not simply during the initial feasibility and assessment phase – improves risk management and will result in better outcomes.

Description of Measures Implemented

Coalspur's Vista project public engagement program and efforts were supported by a four-phase plan for public engagement that tracked the project application as it evolved. The data collected have been presented to assist in corporate project decision making as options were developed, considered, and selected. The public engagement program is ongoing and comprises the following activities:

- Hosting open houses, maintaining an open-door policy, partnering with other industries on community investments and issues within the community, issuing quarterly newsletters, providing information on its corporate Web site, and meeting regularly with stakeholders;
- Ensuring research and understanding the views of stakeholders (for example, Coalspur helped bring together developers, the Town of Hinton, and the local Member of the Legislative Assembly to discuss community housing concerns);
- Encouraging community discussion and welcoming all feedback, as well as using an outside consultant to facilitate community discussions; and
- Regularly scheduled stakeholder meetings and project updates where Coalspur ensures appropriate experts are available, creates action item lists, and follows up on commitments made.



Coalspur has also established and maintained good relationships with government authorities at all levels, keeping them informed of the project's activities and anticipated impacts through regular discussions (quarterly, monthly, or weekly updates).

Results

Partnerships and written agreements have been negotiated and signed with stakeholder groups, such as the three trapline holders: Hinton Fish and Game Association, West Fraser Mills, and the Mountain Cree and Aseniwuche Winewak Nation.

Lessons Learned

Coalspur's public engagement approach for the Vista project has helped to build trust with the local communities. The following elements have been particularly important in fostering community readiness:

- Actively engaging with communities at an early stage of a project is critical to signal the importance of the communities' views and well-being;
- Sustaining relationships with affected communities and other stakeholders throughout the life of its operations – not simply during the initial feasibility and assessment phase – improves risk management and the maximization of benefits, and will result in better outcomes; and
- Communication must be done in good faith with all parties, including those with opposing viewpoints, to ensure their concerns are understood and considered.

For more information:

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