

Luscar and Gregg River Mines Land Management Plan

Context

The Luscar and Gregg River mines are located in Alberta's historic Coal Branch on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. The Gregg River mine operated on 1 252 hectares and the Luscar mine operated on 3 200 hectares. Whitehorse Wildland Provincial Park lies south of the Luscar and Gregg River mine sites, and Jasper National Park (JNP) lies to the west of both mines, separated by a strip of Crown land. At its closest point, JNP is less than 4 km away from the reclaimed lands.

Pre-exploration	Exploration	Development	Operation	Closure	Post-closure
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Leads: Government and industry (Alta.)

Steps of the Mineral Development Sequence:
Closure, post-closure

Key Finding: The Luscar and Gregg River Mines Land Management Plan has established the involvement of stakeholders, Aboriginal groups, and the public as a much-needed component of a planning initiative. The involvement of these various groups has been instrumental in reducing conflicts and providing general direction for the plan.

Subsurface coal mining in the area began in 1911. Modern open-pit coal mining in the Luscar and Gregg River mines area started in 1969 to supply coal for overseas markets. The Gregg River and Luscar mines closed in 2000 and 2003, respectively. The planning area encompasses a significant contiguous area of mine lands of more than 7 100 hectares within which 3 300 hectares were disturbed.

Description of Measures Implemented

Between 2006 and 2011, Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD), in collaboration with Teck Resources Ltd. and Coal Valley Resources Inc., used an integrated land management approach and developed a land management plan (LMP) that is characterized as a Regional Integrated Decision (RID) for public land in the Luscar and Gregg River coal mines area.

The methodology employed for land management planning involved communities, interest groups, and the public. The process engaged stakeholders representing a variety of community interests to establish a vision for the area that would allow for management of the reclaimed habitat and the reintroduction of wildlife populations along with reasonable and appropriate human use, thus providing opportunities for interpretation, education, recreation, and ecotourism.

The project involved seven major stages, including project initiation, data and information gathering, scenario development, draft LMP, LMP approval, LMP implementation and, lastly, monitoring and evaluation. Public and stakeholder participation occurred concurrently with various stages of the project to ensure that the public, directly affected stakeholders, and identified communities of interest (e.g. communities, industry, conservation, recreational users, and traditional land users) had meaningful opportunities to influence the design and development of the LMP. Aboriginal communities were engaged in accordance with the Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Consultation Guidelines.

Results

To date, reclamation of about 100 percent of the Gregg River mine and about 50 percent of the Luscar mine's disturbed area has been completed (earthwork and initial revegetation completed, forest establishment in progress) and reclamation is ongoing on the remaining disturbed areas. The reclamation has resulted in the re-establishment of the area as part of the home range of wildlife species, including bighorn sheep, elk, and provincially threatened species such as grizzly bear and Athabasca rainbow trout. In addition to these prominent species, significant wildlife diversity has emerged and continues to evolve.

The process has provided an opportunity for collaboration among provincial and local government, industry, Aboriginal groups, and the public to explore opportunities to develop a more strategic and integrated land management approach to end-of-life land-use planning. The planning initiative has been instrumental in creating a forum to discuss several conflicting values, to share and improve understandings, and to come to an agreement on common management strategies.

Lessons Learned

The Luscar and Gregg River Mines LMP has established the involvement of stakeholders, Aboriginal groups, and the public as a much-needed component of a planning initiative. The involvement of these various groups has been instrumental in reducing conflicts and in providing general direction for the plan. The process was challenging because of differences of opinion and sometimes conflicting priorities; however, dialogue and communication at the initiation of the planning process helped overcome these conflicts. Collaboration resulting from engagement forums has been particularly beneficial and should be considered an example of a good practice in community engagement and readiness. This collaboration has helped dispel negative perceptions, created a better understanding of constraints, and provided the opportunity for participants to explore and appreciate the opportunities that post-mine landscapes afford for biodiversity conservation and other land uses.

For more information:

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