



Matanuska Watershed View

Quarterly Newsletter by Castle Mountain Coalition

Spring 2013



The Faces of CMC

Jamey Duhamel,
Program Director

Hi everyone! I am so excited to be the newest addition to the Castle Mountain Coalition family. As Program Director, I will be working to protect our Matanuska Watershed communities from the impacts of coal mine projects. I was raised here in the Mat-Su and my husband and I are now raising our four sons in Sutton. I have a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and have spent most of my life in the social work field. Two years ago I left my social work career to dedicate my life to stopping the Mat-Su coal mine projects and I haven't regretted a single moment since. I love working with the people of this community and I look forward to meeting each of you and finding ways to get you involved and energized about protecting our quality of life here in the beautiful Mat-Su. Feel free to contact me anytime, my email is director@castlemountain.org or call me at 907-982-6828. I would love to speak with you!

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Interested in joining the board? We are looking for new members! Email us at board@castlemountain.org.



Importance of owning your water rights

A water right is a legal right to use surface or groundwater under the Alaska Water Use Act (AS 46.15). When a water right is granted, it becomes attached to the land where the water is being used for as long as the water is used. Alaska landowners do not have automatic rights to the water on (or under) their land. To obtain water rights in Alaska, you must submit an application to the Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/forms/water/wr_app.pdf

It is important for landowners to have their water rights for residential wells, especially when there is mining nearby. Typically coal mining uses copious amounts of water for coal processing which can affect the quantity and quality of water in nearby wells or streams. So, protect your water and apply for your water rights now.

MineWatch- A new program of CMC

Are you fed up with government bureaucrats and politicians serving the interests of industry while turning their backs on our families and communities? Are you worried that Big Coal might not treat us with the respect that we deserve? Do you want to do more than write letters and hope for the best? CMC has an opportunity for you to engage directly in the shape of coal development in our Valley. We are looking for volunteers to participate in our new MineWatch program.

CMC's MineWatch program is intended to facilitate grassroots monitoring of the coal industry in the Matanuska Watershed. No one is in a better position to monitor industry and defend our communities than those of us who live here. We want to empower citizens to hold the coal mine companies accountable for any negative impacts. We want corporations to follow the rules that are meant to protect us, and we want the regulatory agencies to enforce those rules. We do not trust these institutions to do this on their own. We intend to play a direct role in ensuring the safety of our homes and families by legally monitoring industrial activities in our communities.

CMC's MineWatch program provides training and online resources to help citizens digest regulatory 'alphabet soup' and know who to contact when problems arise. CMC organizes hikes and other outings to familiarize ourselves with the local geography, engage new volunteers, and monitor industrial activity. We maintain a database of observations as well as photo and video documentation. The MineWatch program is intended to facilitate legal citizen engagement in the regulatory process.

If you are interested in participating in this program, you can contact us at director@castlemountain.org. You may also use the resources provided on our website to assist you with your own monitoring and enforcement.

Go to www.castlemountain.org and click on the **MineWatch** tab to learn more.



MineWatch News

For this first episode of MineWatch News, we will focus on the current lay of the land of the three proposed coal mines in the Matanuska Valley. In future editions, we will update you on mine site activities and violation statuses at the mines as we get our new MineWatch program off the ground.

Many of you are interested in the status of the three coal mine proposals here in the Mat-Su. The good news is: here we are in 2013 and no coal is being mined in the Mat-Su! The following is an update on each individual proposal:

Wishbone Hill



- 8000 acre lease; coal to be exported
- ~14 million tons of bituminous coal
- Leased by Usibelli Coal Mine Inc.

It is safe to say that Wishbone Hill is farther from active mining than it has been since 1991 (when the first mine permit was issued). Many of you participated in the hearing held in November 2011 during the mine permit renewal process. So far, the state's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has not renewed that permit and Usibelli is in a state of flux. In addition, there is a preliminary determination from the federal Office of Surface Mining (OSM) that the DNR permits may be out of compliance.

Continued on next page...

...MineWatch News continued.

We are still waiting on a final decision from OSM before insisting that the original Wishbone Hill mine permit be rejected and replaced by Usibelli with a new application.

Additionally, Usibelli has laid off several staff in the state over the last few months in reaction to a declining international coal market. They have been silent on their long-term plans at Wishbone Hill but have said publicly that they do not intend to conduct any exploration or operations this summer (2013).

Jonesville



- 1,450 acre lease
- 131 million tons of medium-grade bituminous coal
- Leased by Ranger Alaska

At this time the Jonesville leases are owned by Ranger Alaska, a subsidiary of Black Range Minerals from Australia, however we know there are several companies interested in purchasing the leases. This project has been nearly inactive for years, however an exploration permit was recently renewed. The validity of that permit renewal is under scrutiny and CMC is part of the inquiry to ensure all laws were followed.

Chickaloon



- 10,000 acre lease
- Bituminous & coking coal
- Planned for export
- Leased by Riversdale Alaska

This project is probably the most active of all three coal proposals at this time. Riversdale has an active exploration permit for the 15 square miles of leased land surrounding the heart of the Chickaloon community. Exploration activities in 2012 included drilling at 9 sites, hours of invasive helicopter flights that skimmed homes and scared away wildlife. Exploration will continue in 2013 with more drilling (up to 14 more holes) and possible shallow trenches. Last autumn, our diligent community residents noticed a problem with the roadway and took steps to report the problem to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). That resulted in a formal water quality violation against Riversdale. CMC's new MineWatch program will focus on this project to ensure Riversdale is following all laws and regulations.

Let's Keep it Going!

Castle Mountain Coalition has many great projects planned for 2013. But we need your help to keep it going!
Please consider making a contribution to CMC today!

Donate



Here is how you can help:

Make a direct donation: Use the included envelope or go online to www.castlemountain.org to donate via paypal.

Online Store: T-shirts, camo-style hats, and scenic postcards available for purchase on our website. Great for gifts!

Thank you from the CMC Board of Directors.

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Mailing label