

# Restriction on Coal Activities on Areas of Public Land in the Eastern Slopes

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Published by Alberta Environment and Parks

September 2020

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# Restriction on Coal Activities on Areas of Public Land in the Eastern Slopes

## Directive

### Purpose

This Directive provides direction regarding coal activities on public lands that were formerly designated as Coal Category 1 in 'A Coal Development Policy for Alberta (1976)'.

### Policy Context

'A Coal Development Policy for Alberta (1976)' is no longer in effect as of June 1, 2020 thereby removing the Coal Categories that were used to provide place-based direction for coal activities throughout Alberta and specifically across the Eastern Slopes of Alberta's Rocky Mountains. This directive provides notification to coal proponents, Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP), Alberta Energy and the Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) that the direction previously provided on Coal Category 1 lands will remain in effect on public lands. Specifically this means:

- Coal leasing, exploration and development on public lands will continue to be restricted on public lands that were formerly designated as Coal Category 1 through the rescinded 'A Coal Development Policy for Alberta (1976)' as also outlined in Alberta Energy Information Letter 2020-23 regarding the rescission of 'A Coal Development Policy for Alberta (1976)' with additional details in Alberta Energy Information Bulletin 2020-02.
- Former Coal Category 1 lands, which are environmentally sensitive, will continue to be managed to preserve their watershed, biodiversity, recreation and tourism values; alternative uses that have a higher priority than coal activities.
- Private lands and freehold minerals are exempt from these restrictions.

This direction is implemented through the establishment of four Protective Notations (PNT) aligned with the Land Use Framework regions covered by former Coal Category 1 lands. The PNTs will be placed within the South Saskatchewan Region, the North Saskatchewan Region, the Upper Athabasca Region and the Upper Peace Region. The PNTs are an interim tool that will remain in place until land-use planning or other policy instruments provide updated direction for former Coal Category 1 areas and replace the direction provided by the PNTs.

Coal leasing, exploration and development on public land continue to be guided by a suite of policy, planning, operational standards and guidelines. Examples include the Eastern Slopes Policy, Integrated Resource Plans, regional and sub-regional plans, parks and protected areas, public land notations, and operating standards and conditions. These policies establish conditions for access and resource use and are applied in the regulatory processes governing coal exploration and development activities. The social, environmental and economic impacts of

proposed projects are evaluated in regulatory decision-making to ensure the public interest is upheld.

### **Restriction on Dispositions**

Recognizing the above policy context, *Public Lands Act* dispositions shall not be issued for coal development activities on former Coal Category 1 lands.

### **Enforcement/Compliance**

This direction as communicated through the protective notations is mandatory and must be adhered to by the Government of Alberta, the Alberta Energy Regulator and proponents.

### **Contact Information**

AEP Planning Branch  
AEP.Planning@gov.ab.ca

### **Authorities**

Section 14(a) of the *Public Lands Act*

The Minister may restrict the disposition of or withdraw from disposition any public land in any specified area in any manner the Minister considers warranted.

The following roles are responsible for maintaining, approving and using this directive:

Directive Owner: AEP Lands Planning Branch

Directive Approver: AEP Minister

Directive Users: Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Energy, Alberta Energy Regulator

Original signed by:

September 9, 2020



Jason Nixon  
Minister, Environment and Parks

