



Photo: Harvey Locke

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Koocanusa Needs Attention

October 26, 2015

Greetings!

Lake Koocanusa needs a bit of TLC. It straddles the Montana - British Columbia border and receives a contaminated load of *selenium* and other heavy metals from the Elk River in B.C.

The Elk River coal mines - five of them and expanding - operated by Teck mining, leech selenium into the watershed (see illustration below for details).

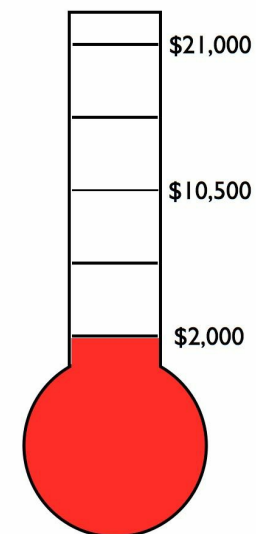
The Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is charged with protecting Montana's water.

Headwaters Montana board members, Dawain Burgess (a committed community volunteer and fire chief from Fortine, Montana) submitted the editorial (below) to regional newspapers.

Bottom line, we encourage anyone interested in keeping Koocanusa healthy to attend the DEQ and B.C. Ministry of the Environment co-hosted public meeting this Thursday, October 29, from 6:30-9:00pm at [Riverstone Family Lodge](#) just north of Eureka. It's an important opportunity to learn some facts and ask for tough water quality standards for Koocanusa!

Cheers!

2015 Fundraising Goal



Let's Raise the Temperature!

Headwaters Montana must raise \$21,000 by the stroke of midnight, December 31, in order to meet the IRS required individual donor match. Will you please [donate](#) today!

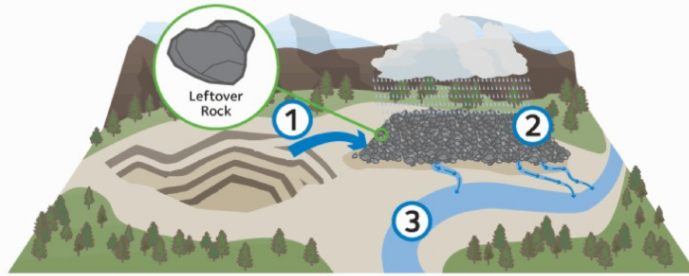


Dave Hadden, Director

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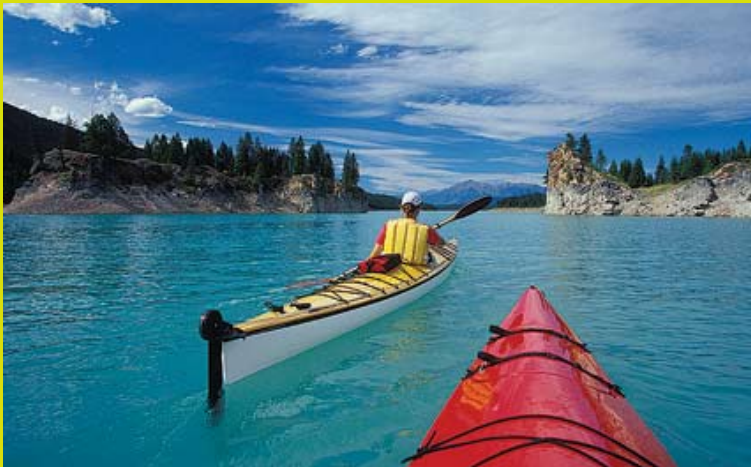
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Our Challenge



1. The mining process generates large quantities of leftover rock that contains naturally-occurring substances such as selenium, an element that is essential for human and animal health in small amounts.
2. Water from both precipitation and runoff flows through these rock piles and carries selenium and other substances, such as nitrate, into the local watershed.
3. If present in high enough concentrations in the watershed, those substances can adversely affect aquatic health.

Graphic provided by Teck mining.



Kayaking on Lake Koocanusa. Image from archive.avenuecalgary.com

Here's what's on our plate for 2016:

~ Help our Flathead Wild campaign complete the Wildlife Management Area and Waterton Park expansion

~ Get the [Whitefish Range Wilderness proposal](#) introduced in Congress

~ Protect the North Fork Flathead from logging in BC

~ Resolve Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area issue

~ Achieve Kootenai Forest "Common Ground" wilderness recommendations

~ Protect wildlands through Flathead Forest planning

~ Protect open space in the Flathead Valley

~ And lots more!!

Your [donation](#) will get us to our goal!

Thank you!

Koocanusa Needs Help

Public Stakeholder Meeting

Thursday, October 29, 6:30-9:00pm

Riverstone Family Lodge, Eureka, MT

Dear Editor:

On Thursday, October 29, from 6:30 - 8:00pm, the Montana Department of



Environmental Quality (DEQ) and
British Columbia Ministry of the
Environment (MoE) will co-host a

"stakeholder meeting" concerning the selenium pollution of Lake Koochanusa from upstream B.C. coal mines. I encourage anyone who fishes or recreates on Lake Koochanusa, or is concerned about economic development in the region, to attend this meeting, to be held at the Riverstone Lodge in Eureka.

Earlier that day the Lake Koochanusa International Workgroup will be meeting to discuss water sampling methods and standards, fish toxicity, and other issues related to selenium and other pollutants crossing the border. This group will eventually determine the depth and scope of the science used to control the pollution.

This is not a new issue. The pollution emanating from B.C.'s coalmines on the Elk River has been mounting for years and is increasing. Complicating the picture, this pollution will continue to increase and persist hundreds of years into the future unless Teck mining and the B.C. government commit to water treatment and other measures that actually address the problem.

A solution is possible. But only if Montana citizens insist on it. Montanans dealt effectively with proposed mountaintop removal coalmines in the North Fork of the Flathead by insisting on a coalmining ban on both sides of the border near Glacier Park. Now it's time for citizens and the state - from the governor's office down - to focus on the Elk and Koochanusa.

It's now beyond time to act. The Montana DEQ shares some of the blame for this delay. It's time for DEQ to step up and protect Montana's interests.

DEQ needs to fight for a scientifically defensible standard for selenium pollution in Koochanusa. I am concerned that DEQ will adopt a standard that benefits B.C. at the expense of Montana's economy and environment. To do so would actually subsidize the B.C. coalmining industry at Montana's expense.

Please plan on attending this meeting, learn more about the issue, and express your thoughts on improving water quality and lowering fish toxicity in Lake Koochanusa.



Thank you,
Dawain Burgess, Fortine

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Protecting the Water, Wildlife and Traditional Outdoor Heritage in the Crown of the Continent!

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