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1. Introducing the Highvale Mine and Pit 09

TransAlta Generation Partnership (TransAlta) is applying to Alberta Environment & Sustainable Resource Development (AESRD) and the Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB) for a licence to develop, operate and reclaim a new mine pit (Pit 09) within the current approved Highvale Mine permit boundary (see Figure 1).

This public information package provides information to the public about the proposed development of Pit 09.

TransAlta first applied to the ERCB for a permit for the Highvale Mine in 1976. When the permit was granted in 1977, it gave TransAlta the mineral rights to the coal resources underlying the Highvale Mine Permit Area (shown in Figure 1). The permit also gave TransAlta approval to develop the Highvale Mine (coal processing facilities, access roads, etc.), and to conduct mineral exploration within the Permit Area. In order to proceed with mining, TransAlta also has to apply to the ERCB and AESRD for a licence for each of the pits within the Highvale Mine Permit Area.

Why does TransAlta need to develop a new pit?

The development of Pit 09 is needed to provide a continuous supply of coal for the Keephills thermal generating plants. The original Highvale Mine permit application included plans for the development of the Pit 09 area.

Who owns and operates the Highvale Mine?

The Highvale Mine is owned by TransAlta Generation Partnership (TransAlta) and operated by Prairie Mines and Royalty Ltd. (PMRL). TransAlta’s plants and the Highvale Mine combined currently employ approximately 1,500 people.

Where is the Highvale Mine located and how big is it?

The Highvale Mine is located to the south of Wabamun Lake, approximately 70 km west of Edmonton, in Township 50, Range 4; Township 51, Ranges 3 and 4; and Township 52, Ranges 5 and 4; all west of the fifth Meridian (see Figure 1).

The Mine Permit Area covers approximately 12,621 hectares (31,187 acres) as shown in Figure 1. Within this area, six pits are currently licensed and in various stages of mining (Pits 03, 04, 05, 06, 07 and 08). The schedule for closure and reclamation of current mine pits and the proposed Pit 09 is shown in Table 1.
Figure 1: Permit Area of the Highvale Mine Including Individual Pit Licence Boundaries and the Proposed Licence Boundary for Pit 09
Table 1: Highvale Mine – Schedule of Proposed Pit Closures and Final Reclamation Completion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mine Pit</th>
<th>Mine Pit Closed (Approximate)</th>
<th>Mine Pit Reclaimed (Approximate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pit 03</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit 04</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>2024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit 05</td>
<td>2024</td>
<td>2029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit 06</td>
<td>2023</td>
<td>2028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit 07</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit 08</td>
<td>2025</td>
<td>2030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pit 09 (proposed)</td>
<td>2056</td>
<td>2061</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) As mine plans are developed and future coal requirements of the Sundance and Keephills Thermal Plants are redefined, Pit 7 may be re-activated. Although Pit 7 is inactive at this time, a significant portion of the disturbed area can be reclaimed without impacting future re-activation plans.

How much coal does the mine produce?

Currently, the six pits at Highvale Mine produce approximately 12 million tonnes of coal each year. The coal from Highvale Mine provides fuel for the Sundance and Keephills power plants providing about one-quarter of Alberta’s electricity generation capacity. Pit 09 would be expected to produce an average of approximately 2.8 million tonnes of coal each year.

Where will Pit 09 be located, and how big will it be?

Pit 09 will be located in Townships 50 and 51, Range 4, approximately 2.5 km south of the Keephills plants’ site and 1 km west of the North Saskatchewan River, in the southeast corner of the Highvale Mine Permit Area (see Figure 1).

The Pit 09 proposed licence area covers about 2,814 hectares (6,954 acres), as shown in Figure 2. The pit will be about 2 km wide (1.25 miles, east-west) and about 5.2 km long (3.25 miles, north-south).

The proposed Pit 09 boundary as shown in Figures 1 and 2 is entirely within the approved Permit Area of the Highvale Mine. This means that TransAlta owns the mineral rights within the proposed Pit 09 boundary, and can apply to mine coal there.
Figure 2: Proposed Pit 09 Mine Development Area
2. Summary of the Pit 09 Mine Plan

What is the schedule for developing, mining and reclaiming Pit 09?

The development of Pit 09 is proposed to begin in the summer of 2016 (Figure 3). The first coal would be mined a year later in the summer of 2017 and mining would be expected to continue at Pit 09 until 2056.

Reclamation of the first mined out area of Pit 09 is proposed for 2020, and reclamation will be ongoing for the life of the pit. Final reclamation of Pit 09 is proposed to be completed in 2061.

Figure 3: Proposed Schedule of Activities for Pit 09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>Pit Development</th>
<th>Regular Operations</th>
<th>Closure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016 Q1 Q2 Q3</td>
<td>2017 Q1 Q2 Q3</td>
<td>2018 Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree Clearing (fall/winter activity)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topsoil Stripping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drainage Infrastructure*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerline Infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining Pit 09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal Delivered to Plant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reclamation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road Re-Establishment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Drainage activities will be conducted in spring and summer as required.

What are the planned stages of mining Pit 09?

For all mines, there are three stages: the pre-mining or preparation stage, the coal mining stage, and the reclamation stage. Proposed mining activities in Pit 09 will be comparable to those carried out in other pits of the Highvale Mine. Activities of each stage of mining Pit 09 will include:

Pre-mining

1. Relocation of county roads and transmission lines.
2. Construction of drainage and power distribution infrastructure.
3. Construction of haul road.
5. Soil conservation (topsoil and subsoil stripping & storage).

Mining

6. Removal of overburden by shovels, trucks, and draglines.
7. Removal of coal.
8. Hauling coal to Keephills 1/2 and K3.
Reclamation

9. Contouring disturbed areas and re-establishing surface water resources.
10. Replacement of reclamation soils (topsoil and subsoil).
11. Revegetation and land management.

Typical surface mining operations are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Typical Surface Mining Operation

How will Pit 09 be mined?

Pit 09 will be mined from east to west as shown in Figure 5. Topsoil and suitable subsoil materials will be salvaged prior to the overburden removal and either directly placed over contoured overburden as part of reclamation activities or stockpiled for later use. Overburden will be moved to areas in and around the pit. Where possible, clean surface water will be diverted to nearby streams and mine wastewater will be collected by a series of ponds and pumped to the Pit 08 Wastewater Treatment facility where it will be treated before being pumped to the North Saskatchewan River.
Figure 5: Proposed Pit 09 Mining Plan
What equipment will be used?

Equipment use will vary over the course of operations in Pit 09. Once the mining stage is reached, equipment used on a routine basis will include: draglines, dozers, graders, front-end loaders, an electric shovel, coal haul trucks, large hydraulic backhoes, overburden haul trucks, a blast-hole drill and pick-up trucks. Some of this equipment will also be used during the development and reclamation of the site.

The Bucyrus 8750 Dragline was constructed for mining in Pits 08/09.

Electric shovel and haul truck conducting prestrip operations at the Highvale Mine.

Mine haul truck used in the Highvale Mine.
Will any roads be constructed or diverted?

As mining progresses, there will be a need to close and redirect existing public access roads. TransAlta considers road closures in the long range planning processes, and endeavours to provide local area residents with safe alternative access routes with minimal impact. Main north-south access roads, including Range Road (RR) 35 (RR35) and RR43 which both connect to Highway 627, will remain in place. TransAlta has upgraded RR35 to a higher standard than it was previously and is also planning to upgrade and pave RR43 up to Highway 627.

Several county roads will need to be diverted or constructed to facilitate the development of Pit 09. Figure 6 shows the county roads that are proposed to be changed.

A coal haul road will be constructed along the east side of Pit 09 and will connect with an existing haul road (developed for Pit 08) that runs north to the Keephills plant.

Will electrical transmission or distribution lines be moved or built?

To support the development of Pit 09, new 25 kV distribution lines will be built to the west of the pit to replace those that enter the pit from the east. These new distribution lines will power electrical equipment such as shovels and draglines.

In addition, a 25 kV FortisAlberta line that currently exists along Township Road 512 will need to be relocated.

Figure 7 shows the electrical transmission lines that will be moved and constructed.

Will there be blasting in Pit 09?

There are three types of blasting used at the Highvale Mine. They are:

- **Coal blasting** requires the least amount of explosives and is used to “loosen” the coal seam to enable loading operations.

- **Bench blasting** fractures the rock overburden.

- **Cast blasting** uses increased explosive energy to both fracture the rock and to displace it into the pit. Cast blasting noise and vibration is more noticeable to our neighbours than the other forms of blasting.

Cast blasting is not expected to be used in Pit 09. Coal and bench blasting use less explosive material than cast blasting.
Figure 6: Proposed Public Road Relocations
Figure 7: Proposed Transmission and Distribution Line Changes
3. Environmental Review

As part of the process of applying to the ERCB and AESRD, TransAlta has engaged a number of environmental consulting and engineering firms to conduct a comprehensive and thorough review of the potential effects of mining on the environment and community in the areas surrounding Pit 09. Topics being covered in this environmental review include:

- Groundwater
- Noise
- Air Quality
- Streams, Rivers and Lakes
- Fish and Fish Habitat
- Soils and Landforms
- Land Use
- Vegetation and Wetlands
- Wildlife
- Traditional (First Nation) Land Use
- Historic Resources, Archaeology and Paleontology

The results of this review will be presented in the Application to the ERCB and AESRD later this year.

What are the potential environmental effects of Pit 09, and how will they be managed?

Some of the more important environmental effects are related to groundwater, noise, dust and reclamation. TransAlta takes environmental concerns very seriously, and has developed programs to investigate the potential effects of mining Pit 09, as well as developing and implementing management practices to help reduce environmental effects.

Groundwater

An aquifer is any underground layer of rock, gravel or other material from which a useful quantity of groundwater can be extracted.

A piezometer is a non-pumping well, generally of small diameter, used to measure the elevation of a water table in a specific water-bearing aquifer.

Quantity of groundwater is often cited as a concern to neighbours close to mining activities. This concern is largely focused on the quantity of water in the vicinity of the mine; specifically, the lowering of water tables which can potentially affect nearby wells and ponds.

As mine pits extend well below the surface, local disruption of aquifers may occur. Groundwater drawdown in the upper groundwater aquifers is inevitable in all mining operations. As a result, water supplies in neighbouring wells may be affected as the mine advances. The lowering of the water table surrounding the mine is temporary and water levels typically recharge to pre-mining levels once mining is completed. TransAlta monitors an extensive network of monitoring wells (or piezometers), throughout the Highvale Mine area to assess the effect that the mine activities have had on groundwater. From this information, TransAlta develops maps of the major water-bearing formations showing the probable extent, or drawdown, around the mine pits.
and local area. This information is reported every two years to AESRD in the Mine Annual Reports to comply with the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act Approval.

The amount of change to the groundwater table will vary depending on the geological characteristics of the aquifer.

Should water well issues arise, TransAlta will address each concern in accordance with their Water Supply Policy (please refer to TransAlta’s website at http://www.transalta.com/communities/canada/lake-wabamun/abt-good-neighbours-policies).

TransAlta monitors local water supplies. A water well inventory program records and updates current sources of water, levels and types of wells in use. This information is kept on file and is used to identify wells that are likely to be a concern and how a concern could be rectified.

TransAlta has a groundwater consultant examining the potential effects on groundwater from Pit 09 mining. The results of this study will be included as part of our application to AESRD and the ERCB.

**Noise**

The ERCB has established limits on noise emissions from mining activities in the published ERCB Directive 038 Noise Control (http://www.ercb.ca/docs/documents/directives/Directive038.pdf). This directive aims to limit outdoor noise levels for residents near facilities, but does not guarantee that a resident will not hear noises from a facility. TransAlta’s Highvale mining operations must meet the Noise Control Directive. The Permissible Sound Levels (PSL) vary for each residence, depending on factors such as the density of housing and road traffic. For most of our neighbours, the directive indicates a PSL of 50 A-weighted decibels (dBA) during the day (7 a.m. to 10 p.m.) and a PSL of 40 dBA during the night (10 p.m. to 7 a.m.).

A noise scale is provided to show the relative sound levels encountered in various settings (Figure 8).

TransAlta recognizes that mining operations are sometimes noisy and that the development of Pit 09 will change noise in the area. As Pit 09 is developed and new equipment is added to the existing fleet, noise levels may change.

In response to previous Noise Impact Assessments, TransAlta has retrofitted the mining fleet to minimize the noise they are emitting. This practice will continue with new equipment that will be acquired when the pit is operational. Furthermore, quarterly noise modelling is conducted by an external noise consultant to determine the noise levels that may be produced by the upcoming mine activities. Forecast mine plans for each quarter are analyzed and recommendations such as changes to mine plans or better placement of equipment during nighttime hours are made. These recommendations are then communicated to mine operations to be implemented when required.

Noise levels attributable to Pit 09 will be assessed by conducting a Noise Impact Assessment for the Pit 09 area, which will be submitted with the application to the ERCB and AESRD.
Permissible Sound Level (PSL) includes sound contribution from ambient (i.e., background) noise, other regulated facilities (e.g., oil and gas infrastructure, power/utilities infrastructure), and any newly proposed regulated facilities (i.e., the Project). Nighttime PSL at receptors in rural environments is 40 dBA (ERCB - Directive 038).
Air quality

As with any mine, a variety of heavy equipment will be involved in pre-mining, mining and reclamation activities at Pit 09. This equipment will include draglines, dozers, graders, front-end loaders, an electric shovel, coal haul trucks, large hydraulic backhoes, overburden haul trucks, a blast hole drill and pickup trucks. Air emissions (exhaust) from such equipment has the potential to affect air quality. TransAlta takes public concerns about air quality seriously and has taken a number of steps to reduce air emissions from its operations.

Local emissions control measures include:

- dust management practices to minimize particulate matter (e.g. airborne fine or coarse particles, or dust);
- proper equipment maintenance; and
- the use of electric-powered equipment, where possible, to minimize equipment exhaust emissions.

TransAlta has a key role to play in maintaining local and regional air quality. For this reason, TransAlta participates in a number of regional monitoring programs and routinely conducts voluntary monitoring at a number of sites. We are also a member of the West Central Airshed Society (www.wcas.ca).

Air quality monitoring in the region is conducted for a number of compounds including sulphur dioxide, oxides of nitrogen, ozone, dust and particulate matter. Over the years, the results of the monitoring have generally indicated that air quality in the region is good, with measured concentrations remaining within air quality objectives. TransAlta is committed to ensuring the continued success of the air quality monitoring and management programs.
Dust

A number of dust emission sources can be associated with the operation of a coal mine. At Highvale Mine Pit 09, these sources may include the dust generated by heavy equipment operation, vehicle traffic, and the operation of farm equipment on reclaimed land.

TransAlta has taken numerous steps to control dust at the Highvale Mine. Dust control measures currently in practice at Highvale Mine that will be used at Pit 09 will include:

- spraying water and dust suppressant on the mine’s haul roads;
- using vegetation and straw mulch to cover surfaces prone to wind erosion;
- shutting down certain mine operations at times of extreme wind conditions; and
- contouring and planting vegetation on spoil piles as soon as possible after mining.

TransAlta is committed to the effective implementation of these dust control measures and looks for ways to improve our dust management practices. We continually test and review various forms of environmentally friendly dust control products and have found some that have proven to be effective at controlling fugitive dust from our haul roads, parking lots and stockpiles.

Traffic impacts

Because mine operations will be shifting to Pit 09 from other pits within the Highvale Mine, it is not expected there will be any significant increases to traffic due to the opening of Pit 09. The majority of workers will continue to come from the east, travelling on provincial highways (Highways 16 and 627) to get to the worksite. On an average 12 hour weekday-shift at the Highvale Mine, there could be up to 200 people working between the pits, shops, coal-handling plant and offices. The daily average will fluctuate depending on the number on contractors that are on site for projects and other work. In addition, existing coal-haul roads within the active mine are used to transport workers to the different pits within the mine. Overall, it is expected there will be minimal impact to local traffic on public roads due to the development and operation of Pit 09.
Reclamation

Reclamation is the process of reconstructing disturbed land to a condition that supports end-use land planning objectives. TransAlta takes seriously its responsibility to return mined land to a capability of equal to or better than before mining began.

TransAlta fully incorporates land reclamation into its long-term plans for all mine pits, including Pit 09. When it comes to mine reclamation, TransAlta is proud to have led the way in Alberta. TransAlta began reclaiming mined land several years before the Alberta Government established provincial regulations. TransAlta’s reclaimed lands support a wide variety of land uses, such as: agriculture, woodlands, wildlife habitat, recreation and wetlands. Some reclaimed areas are leased to local farmers. Other lands have been returned to the original landowners. These lands are capable of supporting cereal crops and hay production, as well as grazing pasture with stock watering.
Wetland restoration

TransAlta participates in the Alberta Wetland Compensation Program and this is an important component of our reclamation planning and processes. Wetlands are an integral part of the landscape and contribute to the overall biodiversity and ecology of an area. Aside from providing critical wildlife habitat they help reduce soil erosion, retain sediments, absorb nutrients, and store water to moderate impacts of floods and droughts.

The Alberta Wetland Compensation Program determines that for every hectare of wetland that is disturbed, a minimum of three hectares must be replaced. The 3:1 replacement ratio can be achieved in a variety of ways, from reconstructing wetlands, to land donations, or a monetary donation to organizations that manage wetlands. Restoration should take place within the same watershed as the impacted wetland, or in a watershed close by.

During reclamation of a mined area the reclamation process attempts to re-establish wetlands with a functioning natural ecosystem whose characteristics are as close as possible to conditions prior to drainage and disturbance. Complex wetlands such as bogs or fens take a considerable amount of time to fully develop and to compensate for this a higher replacement ratio is employed. For example in the Highvale Mine in Pit 07, TransAlta is restoring a larger area of wetland after a smaller area of natural wetland was disturbed. TransAlta is also in the process of donating land to the Alberta Fish and Game Wildlife Trust.

4. Public Consultation

TransAlta has mined and operated power plants in the Lake Wabamun region for decades and has a commitment to engage with the public, either in relation to new projects or our ongoing operations.

Many opportunities are created for individuals and community groups to provide input into TransAlta’s Pit 09 Project, including the mailing of this information package, a public open house, regular meetings with public advisory groups and regional municipalities, information published in TransAlta’s newsletter, “Kilowatt Connection” and information about the Project published on TransAlta’s website – transalta.com. The public participation program for the Highvale Mine Pit 09 Project will build on existing relationships that TransAlta has in the Wabamun Lake area and will aim to:

- identify stakeholders who may be affected by the Project or those who may be interested in the Project;
- identify and address potential concerns associated with the Pit 09 Project and where possible, to identify appropriate mitigation measures;
- provide the public with clear, timely information about the Pit 09 Project; and
- continue to share information about TransAlta’s ongoing operations in the region.

First Nations engagement

As part of our overall commitment to public engagement, TransAlta is committed to building open, constructive, mutually beneficial and sustainable relationships with the Aboriginal communities with whom we are neighbours. TransAlta actively consults with neighbouring Aboriginal communities, in particular the Paul First Nation.

What is the regulatory application process?

TransAlta is preparing an application to the ERCB and AESRD for approval to begin surface mining operations in Pit 09. The proposed mining area is entirely contained within the Highvale Mine Permit Area. Some infrastructure development (i.e., haul road construction, transmission line relocations, and county road construction) is allowable under the mine permit and may proceed before the Pit 09 licence is approved.

The process for obtaining a mine pit licence and operating approval is as follows:

- TransAlta will submit the Pit 09 Licence Application to ERCB and AESRD (Fall 2012);
- ERCB and AESRD review the Application and request additional information from TransAlta, if required;
- ERCB and AESRD publish a Notice of Application and provide copies of the Application to members of the community;
- Community members review the Application, discuss their outstanding concerns with TransAlta, ERCB and/or AESRD;
- Stakeholders have a window of opportunity (typically 30 days) to file a Statement of Concern with ERCB and AESRD;
- ERCB and/or AESRD may receive Statements of Concern;
- Concerns are reviewed by ERCB, AESRD, TransAlta and community members who filed a Statement of Concern;
- Resolution of community concerns is undertaken (may involve mediation, arbitration or a hearing);
- A decision is made by ERCB and AESRD; and
- ERCB and AESRD provide a Notice of Decision to community members who filed a Statement of Concern.
How do I voice a concern with TransAlta?

At TransAlta we have a policy of open, honest communication with our neighbours and the general public. We would like to hear from you and resolve any concerns about the development of Pit 09. Please contact:

Ralph Leriger
Manager, Communications and Community Relations, TransAlta
1-877-636-7822
email: ralph_leriger@transalta.com

Cheryl McNeil
Sr. Community Relations Advisor, Alberta Coal, TransAlta
1-877-636-7822
email: cheryl_mcneil@transalta.com

How can I contact the ERCB and AESRD?

Community members are encouraged to discuss and resolve issues with TransAlta directly. If, however, you wish to discuss your concerns with the ERCB or AESRD, their contact information is provided below.

Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB)
640, 5th Avenue SW Calgary, AB T2P 3G4
Telephone: (403) 297-8311 or toll free anywhere in Alberta 310-0000
http://www.ERCB.gov.ab.ca

ERCB Drayton Valley Field Centre
Box 7048
5005 - 61 Street
Drayton Valley, Alberta T7A 1S3
Phone: 780-542-5182
Fax: 780-542-2540

Alberta Environment & Sustainable Resource Development (Spruce Grove Office)
Suite 1, 250 Diamond Avenue
Spruce Grove, Alberta T7X 4C7
Telephone: 780-960-8600
Fax: 780-960-8605
http://environment.gov.ab.ca