



Reeve Daniel Henn  
Rocky View Council  
262075 Rocky View Point  
Rocky View County T4A 0X2

February 25, 2021

RE: Mountain Ash Summit Pit MSDP (PL2020034)

Dear Mr Henn,

Trout Unlimited Canada (TUC) is a national conservation charity that is science-based and volunteer-driven. Partners and volunteers are paramount to the numerous successful river restoration projects we implement every year. Our work protects and enhances water quality, water flow, and aquatic community health. TUC is proud of the critical role our organization has played in the protection of Canada's natural resources for over 40 years and the value of this work to the lives of Canadians.

We recently became aware of the above referenced proposal by Mountain Ash Limited Partnership (MALP) to develop an open pit gravel mine in the headwaters area of Bighill Creek near Bighill Springs Provincial Park.

Bighill Springs is a special place that is important to the local community and the hundreds of thousands of people that visit Bighill Springs Provincial Park every year. The Springs are also a major contributor to Bighill Creek, which is an important feature within Rocky View County and the Town of Cochrane. In the past, Trout Unlimited Canada has participated in riparian restoration activities along Bighill Creek, along with community members and partners. We have also conducted educational fish sampling demonstrations along the creek to educate community members on the fish community of Bighill Creek. In recent years, Trout Unlimited Canada has worked closely with the Bighill Creek Preservation Society, conducting a fish sampling program including multiple sampling sites along Bighill Creek and have provided support on developing and implementing a stream temperature monitoring program. It is clear to us that the creek supports a diverse fish community of both native and naturalized species, provides a relatively unique urban small creek trout fishing opportunity between the Ghost and Bearspaw Dams, provides a treasured visitor experience at the provincial park to view the unique springs and associated geological formations, and is a valuable feature within the Town of Cochrane.

TUC is concerned that the gravel mining operation proposed by Mountain Ash could have potential negative effects on the aquifer that feeds the springs and creek. Removal of a large volume of material in this location may reduce the filtering capacity of the overlying sediments which could negatively affect water quality and flow and impair the health of the system. Our concerns echo

those described by Dr. Jon Fennell in a recent report prepared for Friends of Big Hill Springs Provincial Park and the Bighill Creek Preservation Society, including:

- Proximity of extraction activities to Bighill Springs Provincial Park, particularly the major spring and associated natural features that the Park preserves as well as Bighill Creek, the receiving waterbody from the springs.
- Risk of irreparable negative impacts to the groundwater quality and quantity that feeds the creek and provides habitat for aquatic species.
- Cumulative effects of other ongoing or future gravel extraction activities near the springs and creek.
- Risk and uncertainty as to how climate change may influence gravel mine impacts on the springs and Bighill Creek.

TUC supports the Friends of Big Hill Springs Provincial Park and the Bighill Creek Preservation Society in calling for Rocky View County council to reject the proposed bylaw change that would facilitate the Summit Pit from being developed as proposed, and to consider a protective buffer around the springs to restrict sand and gravel mining activities in the interest of ensuring the long-term protection of water quality and flow of the springs within Bighill Springs Provincial Park which are a major contributor to Bighill Creek.

We understand the need for aggregate and the potential for revenue from levies derived from aggregate extraction to Rocky View County. However, aggregate extraction (from the proposed Summit Pit as well as other existing and potential pits) in such close proximity to a highly valued spring feature (within Bighill Springs Provincial Park) and associated creek (Bighill Creek) pose risks which may not be able to be mitigated nor reversed. The aquifer that feeds the springs should be protected from such risks.

We intend to submit an audio or video submission summarizing these concerns, to be included in the upcoming Public Hearing on March 2.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Lesley Peterson  
Alberta Biologist, Trout Unlimited Canada

Cc:

RVC Councillors and Jessica Anderson, RVC Planner  
Bighill Creek Preservation Society and Friends of Bighill Springs Provincial Park