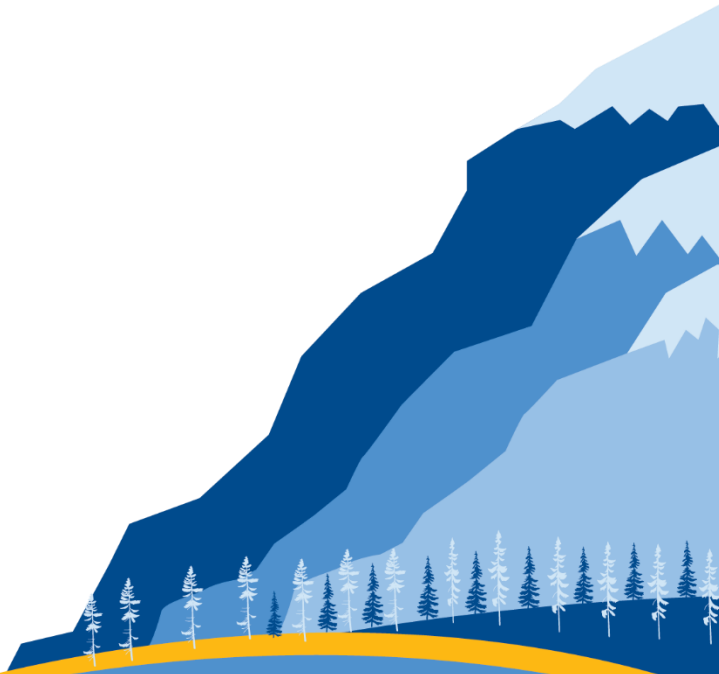
Joint Summary of Engagement

FORDING RIVER EXTENSION PROJECT

JUNE 4, 2026



BRITISH COLUMBIA
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What is the Fording River Extension Project?

Elk Valley Resources (EVR) is proposing the Fording River Extension Project (FRX), a continuation of mining operations to replace production currently sourced from the existing Fording River Operations. The extension would develop a new mining area on Castle Mountain, expanding the mine footprint and enabling several decades of continued steelmaking coal production. The project would maintain the processing facilities at Fording River Operations, with coal hauled from FRX to existing infrastructure.

The project is undergoing a coordinated environmental assessment by the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC). During Early Engagement, the EAO engaged on the proponent's Initial Project Description to inform identification of key issues. EAO undertook a comment period on the Initial Project Description from May 8, 2020 to June 22, 2020, during which a total of 647 public comments was received and published on EAO's EPIC site. Further details are summarized in the Summary of Engagement report produced by the EAO. IAAC commenced the Planning Phase and undertook a comment period on the Initial Project Description from October 14 to November 3, 2020, during which a total of 66 comments were received and published on IAAC's Registry. Key issues were summarized in the Summary of Issues produced by IAAC at the time.

For the Process Planning phase of the BC Environmental Assessment Act and for the portion of the Planning Phase that followed IAAC's Section 16 decision of the *Impact Assessment Act* that determined that an impact assessment was required (hereafter collectively referred to as Process Planning), the EAO and IAAC held a formal 32-day public comment period hosted across both agencies' online platforms. The comment period gathered feedback to inform the documents that will govern the assessment, including the Process Order, Application Information Requirements (AIR), Federal Appendix to the AIR, Joint Assessment and Engagement Plan, and Joint Detailed Permitting Plan.

The federal Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature received requests to refer the federal impact assessment of the project to a review panel under subsection 36(1) of the Impact Assessment Act. Taking into consideration the information available, including opportunities for cooperation with the Province of British Columbia, the federal Minister did not refer the impact assessment of the project to a review panel.

Purpose of This Report

This Joint Summary of Engagement has been prepared and issued by the EAO and IAAC and takes the place of a separate federal Planning Phase Engagement Report.

The Joint Summary of Engagement provides a consolidated account of public engagement undertaken during the Process Planning Phase and describes how participants contributed to shaping the planning documents that will govern the environmental assessment. The report outlines who participated, how engagement was conducted, and the key issues raised through both written submissions and interactive events. For the purposes of Process Planning, a key issue is defined by EAO as:

A matter of substantial importance or concern that may materially influence the environmental assessment scope, methodology, or requirements; reflects persistent or cumulative regional pressures; or requires additional analysis, mitigation, or coordination across jurisdictions.

Overview of the Process Planning Phase

During Process Planning, the EAO and IAAC worked with Indigenous Nations, technical experts, other government agencies, and stakeholders to develop a plan for how the environmental assessment would be carried out.

The Process Order drew on the foundations built in the earlier early engagement and readiness decision phases to set the scope, procedures, and methods for the environmental assessment. It outlined the necessary information and studies, described how various participants would work together, established timelines, and set out how feedback would be collected throughout the assessment process.

During this phase, the EAO and IAAC:

- Published draft planning documents for public review;
- Hosted a formal joint public comment period on the EPIC and IAAC portals;
- Delivered three in-person open houses and one virtual information session;
- Collected extensive written feedback from residents, workers, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), technical commenters, and U.S. downstream communities.

This engagement helped refine the scope and structure of the coming assessment.

HOW WE ENGAGED AND WHO WE HEARD FROM

During the Process Planning Phase, the EAO and IAAC engaged the public through a combination of in-person open houses, a virtual information session, and a formal public comment period. Engagement included both verbal input collected during open houses and virtual information sessions and written feedback submitted through the EAO and IAAC online portals and IAAC project inbox.

Open Houses and Virtual Information Session

Virtual Information Session

- **Platform:** Zoom (hosted by EAO)
- **Date:** January 22, 2026
- **Time:** 11:00–1:00 p.m. PT / 12:00–2:00 p.m. MT
- **Format:**
    - 20-minute EAO/IAAC presentation on the coordinated assessment process
    - 20-minute proponent presentation on the FRX project
    - 20+ minute Q&A with EAO/IAAC staff and EVR technical specialists
- **Registration required**

In-Person Open Houses

EAO and IAAC co-hosted three open houses, one each in Sparwood, Fernie, and Elkford.

Location	Date & Time (Mountain Time)	Number of attendees
Sparwood Causeway Bay Hotel Emerald Room	January 28, 2026 (5:30–8:30 p.m.)	45 attendees

Fernie Best Western Plus Fernie Mountain Lodge, Ball Room	January 29, 2026 (3:30–7:00 p.m.)	77 attendees
Elkford Elkford Community Conference Centre	February 5, 2026 (3:00–6:30 p.m.)	97 attendees

Open House Format & Participation

At each open house:

- EAO, IAAC, and EVR staffed information tables.
- EVR provided slide decks on updated project design, water quality, fisheries, wildlife, and socioeconomic considerations.
- EAO supplied information on the provincial environmental assessment process, public participation tools, and guidelines.
- IAAC supplied information on the federal impact assessment process, public participation tools, and guidelines.
- Attendees included:
    - Members of the public
    - EVR employees
    - Indigenous community members
    - Municipal representatives
    - NGOs and environmental organizations
    - Contractors and suppliers
    - Members of the media

Themes from Open House Questions

- **Sparwood:** Main questions centred on how long the environmental assessment will take and when a decision can be expected.
- **Fernie:** More concern about water quality, especially selenium and downstream implications.
- **Elkford:** Strong interest in EA timelines and decision points; residents also requested information on how to participate in the Community Advisory Committee.
- Across all locations, participants wanted clarity about:
    - How the EA process works,
    - How EAO and IAAC coordinate, and
    - What opportunities exist for public participation.

Written Public Comments

The EAO and IAAC accepted written comments from January 14, 2026 to February 15, 2026. Written submissions through the *EAO EPIC survey*, *IAAC registry*, and IAAC project inbox revealed strong engagement from communities throughout the Elk Valley, as well as a significant number of comments from downstream U.S. residents. Over 200 comments were received and published from members of the public, including letters from NGOs such as Wildsight, the Crowsnest Conservation Society, and the Idaho Conservation League.

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

The EAO and IAAC reviewed all input received from the public during the Process Planning phase for the project. Common concerns were synthesized and organized into key themes and then assessed to determine if the issue outlined was a key issue. Issues that met the definition of a key issue are outlined in Table 2. While the table includes issues that fall within both provincial and federal jurisdiction, IAAC will focus its technical review during the assessment by placing emphasis on key issues relevant to federal decision-making, specifically federal effects and positive benefits as set out in the IAA.

Table 2- Summary of Key Concerns Identified During Process Planning

Comment Theme	Key Issues
Air Quality	• Coal dust deposition reported on homes, vehicles, and vegetation; concern about cumulative dust emissions from mining and transportation corridors. • Requests for long-term ambient monitoring, improved disclosure, and worker health impact assessment. • Calls for coal dust mitigation measures proven effective in other jurisdictions.
Aquatic Resources and Fish	• Decline of Westslope Cutthroat Trout populations; concern that existing cumulative pressures and selenium toxicity will be exacerbated by FRX. • Calls for long-term fish population modelling incorporating selenium, hydrologic change, and climate effects. • Need to identify fish habitat losses from the FRX footprint and provide clear offsetting measures.
Climate Change & Natural Hazard Risk	• Requests for modelling of credible worst-case climate scenarios (extreme precipitation, atmospheric rivers, drought, wildfire). • Concern that water treatment facilities may be vulnerable to climate-driven failures and that effects on water quality must be assessed.
Cumulative Effects	• Many commenters emphasized that cumulative effects—across mining, forestry, recreation, and growing communities—represent the most serious long-term risk in the Elk Valley. • Calls to align FRX assessment with the Cumulative Effects Management Framework and explicitly analyze regional capacity.

Financial Liability & Long-Term Consequences	• Concerns about perpetual water treatment obligations and adequacy of financial assurance. • Risk that premature closure or underperformance could leave long-term environmental liabilities to the public. • Requests for long-term modelling beyond mine closure using precautionary assumptions where uncertainty exists. • Concerns about declining long-term demand for coal, stranded asset risk, and implications for reclamation funding and project viability.
Human Health	• Concerns about health effects on downstream communities, not only workers. • Requests to assess contamination risks to edible agricultural products (plants, fish, and livestock).
Indigenous Rights & Traditional Land Use	• Requests that Indigenous concerns meaningfully influence project design and viability, and not only be documented. • Assessment of impacts to the exercise of Indigenous rights, not just land use presence. • Recognition that some impacts may be unmitigable and requirement to demonstrate free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC).
Infrastructure & Services	• Housing shortages and widespread illegal camping/squatting, linked to mining workforce pressures and environmental degradation on Crown land. • Strain on healthcare, emergency services, and municipal infrastructure (particularly in Elkford).
Socioeconomic & Community Well-Being	• Mixed views: some see FRX as essential for long-term employment; others point to concerns about population pressures, affordability, and quality of life. • Requests to assess socioeconomic benefits and trade-offs transparently. • Requests to assess social licence and alignment with public priorities for water protection and land stewardship.
Transboundary Effects	• U.S. commenters (Montana and Idaho) stressed the need for FRX to meet border water quality objectives, particularly selenium levels at Lake Koocanusa. • Calls for formal incorporation of International Joint Commission (IJC) recommendations, U.S. Tribal concerns, and cross-border ecological health considerations.
Water Quality	• Long-standing selenium exceedances in the Fording and Elk Rivers, with impacts extending into Lake Koocanusa and the Kootenai/Kootenay River, prompting concern about risks to aquatic life and drinking water.

	• Concerns that EVR has not yet demonstrated long-term, reliable reductions in selenium loading; calls to require proof and independent validation of treatment effectiveness under climate-stress and worst-case scenarios before any expansion proceeds. • Requests—especially from U.S. downstream commenters—to pause FRX until IJC recommendations are complete. • Requests for watershed-scale effects assessment, not local-only modeling. • Calls for clear thresholds that would trigger rejection of the project if water quality objectives cannot be achieved.
Wildlife & Habitat	• High-elevation grasslands on Castle Mountain identified as critical winter range for bighorn sheep and potentially irreplaceable—many commenters stated these ecosystems cannot be reclaimed. • Potential for loss of key migration corridors and increased wildlife displacement. • Requests for collaring programs, movement modelling, and mitigation for road/rail mortality.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The feedback received during the Process Planning Phase demonstrated a high level of public interest and highlighted several complex environmental, social, and economic considerations that will need to be addressed through the environmental assessment. Participants consistently emphasized the importance of robust water quality analyses, long-term aquatic and wildlife monitoring, realistic reclamation planning, and the need to situate FRX within the broader cumulative effects context of the Elk Valley. The perspectives shared through the virtual information session, open houses, and written submissions confirm the scope and detailed expectations that the EAO and IAAC have set for the upcoming assessment.

The EAO and IAAC require that the proponent continue engagement with communities and Indigenous Nations as it develops the materials required for the assessment, particularly in areas where concerns were most consistently raised—such as water quality, wildlife habitat, reclamation, climate resilience, cumulative effects, and long-term monitoring. The proponent is also required to demonstrate clearly how public feedback during Process Planning has informed revisions to project design and assessment materials, and to provide accessible, plain language explanations of technical information wherever possible. Maintaining early and ongoing communication will help ensure that local priorities and knowledge continue to be meaningfully integrated as the project advances through the environmental assessment process.