

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, announced today that Canadian officials met with representatives of the United States and the State of Montana in Ottawa on March 9, 1976, to consult with regard to the proposal by Sage Creek Coal Limited, a subsidiary of Rio Algom Limited, to develop coal deposits in the British Columbia headwaters of the North Fork of the Flathead River. The meeting was further to exchanges of Notes between the Canadian and United States Governments, wherein the U.S.A. expressed concern that the project could seriously damage efforts to preserve the unique environmental value of Glacier National Park, the Flathead National Forest and the Flathead River Basin, and could cause injury to both public and private property in the area. Canada, in response, gave assurances that its obligations under the Boundary Waters Treaty would be honoured.

During the meeting, Canadian officials reiterated the assurances contained in earlier Canadian Notes and outlined in some detail British Columbia and federal legislation, regulations and procedures through which compliance with Canada's international obligations would be ensured in the event that Rio Algom chooses to seek approval to develop the project. Canadian officials also offered to furnish the United States authorities with detailed environmental studies required under British Columbia legislation as they become available.

The United States side expressed its appreciation for the exchange of information and noted with satisfaction the comprehensive environmental assessment procedures that will be required for the project.

Both delegations agreed on the utility of further consultations to take into account United States' concerns. In addition, the United States will supply the Canadian authorities with water quality and other data from the Flathead drainage on the American side of the border.

The Canadian delegation included representatives from the Department of External Affairs, Environment Canada, Energy, Mines and Resources, Indian and Northern Affairs, and the Government of British Columbia. The United States delegation included representatives of the State Department, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forest Service, and the Government of Montana.