Coal continues to reign as king, dominates Utah’s mining industry

By RICHARD SHAW
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While Carbon and Emery officials work toward diversifying the industrial bases, coal remains a major factor in the counties’ economies.

In the latest report released by the Utah Department of Natural Resources, the amount of coal revenues generated statewide increased and the mines in Utah produced $599,500,000.

The total revenue figure was up from $485,400,000 in 2005 and represented the largest revenue level reported since 1997.

During most of the last 47 years, coal revenues have grown primarily because of expanded production, according to the department of natural resources.

In 1960, coal mines in Utah produced $212,200,000 in revenues.

By 1970, the figure had dropped to $177,300,000.

But during the 1980s, an energy boom brought prices up and increased production brought the states revenues to $821,700,00.

Only once in the history of coal production in the state have revenues topped $1 billion dollars and that was in 1982, when the figure reached $1,029,100,000 noted the department of natural resources.

The bulk of the coal in the state is produced in Carbon and Emery counties.

Of the 931,361 thousand short tons of coal produced since 1960 in Utah, 804,774 thousand short tons came from the two counties.

Nationally, Wyoming leads in per year coal short ton production with the Cowboy state producing 406,364 short tons in 2005.

West Virginia ranks second, producing with 153,560 short tons in 2005.

Wyoming has a large number of mining operation and a lot of the coal produced in the state is pit mined.

In the national rankings, Utah places 14th in coal production.

Overall production of coal in the United States has increased In 2005, the country produced 1,133,290 short tons of coal for a growth of 1.9 percent compared to 2004.

At present, the western region produces more than 51 percent of the coal mined nationwide each year.

Production levels and the technology used to produce coal have affected the number of Utahns working at mines.

In 1960, 2,418 people were employed at 45 coal mines in Utah, pointed out the department of natural resources.

By 1970, the number of employees decreased to 1,469, with only 21 mines operating across the state.

Employment at mines hit a peak in 1982 when 29 coal oper-
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(Continued from page 1A) operations in Utah reported a record number of 4,296 employees.

In 2005, there were 13 mines in Utah, with eight operators and 1,803 employees.

Nevertheless, the production of coal has increased considerably, despite fewer mines and employees.

When employment at coal mines peaked in 1982, the state produced 16,912 thousand short tons.

In 2006, the department of natural resources projects that Utah mines will produce 26,715 short tons with less than half the employees reported in 1982.

The single largest producing mine in the state in 2005 was SUFCO in Sevier County, with 7,567 thousand short tons produced.

Next was the Dugout mine in Carbon County, operated by Canyon Fuel, which produced 4,592 thousand short tons.

Deer Creek mine in Emery County was third with 3,910 thousand short tons.

The vast majority of the coal produced in Utah goes for electric power generation, with a slightly less than one-half being transported out of state for that purpose.

In 2005, 20,164 short tons went for making electricity, with 5,934 short tons going to out-of-state generation plants.

In terms of industrial use, the story is just the opposite with the vast majority of coal from Utah going to this purpose going out of state.

In 2005, 3,313 thousand short tons of coal were transported to locations outside of Utah for industrial uses, while 713 thousand short tons stayed within the boundaries of the Beehive State.

Although many Utahns continue to think that coal produced by operators in the state is transported overseas to places like Japan and Korea, the assumption is not true.

Between 1981 and 2003, major amounts of coal were going to the Pacific Rim with more than 5,400 short tons exported in 1996.

But in recent years, the amount of exported coal has dropped, registering at 212 short tons in 2005.

The majority of Utah’s exported coal went to Canada.

The department of natural resources forecasts that, in 2006, there would be no export of Utah coal across American borders.

Most of the Utah coal shipped to areas within the borders of the United States goes to Nevada and California.