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State of Utah
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF OIL, GAS AND MINING

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TO: Internal File

FROM: Paul Baker, Reclamation Biologist & Team Lead 

RE: Phase I Bond Release Application, Castle Gate Holding Company, Castle Gate Mine, ACT/007/004-BR00B

SUMMARY:

The Hardscrabble Canyon portion of the Castle Gate Mine was reclaimed in 1984 and 1985 and 1993 through 1999. The substation was not reclaimed because it may eventually be used for power transmission. The road through the disturbed area was altered but left in place for the postmining land use. On May 22, 2000, the Division gave final approval for the as-built designs.

The bond release application consists of a detailed cover letter, a copy of the proposed newspaper advertisement, and copies of letters to local government agencies and owners of adjacent lands. The applicant is relying on the already-approved as-built designs for most of the information needed for the bond release.

TECHNICAL ANALYSIS:

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Regulatory Reference: R645-301-880.100, R645-301-880-200

Analysis:

The applicant is required to file the application at a time or season appropriate for evaluation of the reclamation work. With the bond release application being received July 3, the Division should have enough time before snowfall to evaluate the application and reclamation work.

TECHNICAL MEMO

The proposed newspaper advertisement submitted with the application contains one problem that should be corrected before advertising actually begins. The application says the permit was issued December 24, 1994, but it was actually renewed in 1999. The application contains a legal description of the entire permit area, and while this is acceptable, it is not necessary. The proposed advertisement is complete in other ways.

The Division is required to conduct an inspection and evaluation of the reclamation work within 30 days of receipt of the bond release application. Based on this schedule, the bond release inspection should be conducted by August 2, 2000.

Findings:

Information in the proposal is not adequate to meet the requirements of this section of the regulations. Prior to final approval, the applicant must supply the following information in accordance with:

R645-301-880.100, The applicant needs to correct one minor error on the proposed newspaper advertisement. Also, the Division needs to receive proof of publication of the newspaper advertisement.

REMAINING RECLAMATION

Regulatory Reference: R645-301-880-210

Analysis:

As part of the bond release inspection, the Division is required to evaluate the difficulty to complete any remaining reclamation. A complete analysis cannot be done until after the bond release inspection, but based on several previous site visits, the Division feels the probability of future revegetation success is high.

Most of the area under consideration for Phase I bond release was seeded or planted in 1996-1999, but some of the area was seeded in 1993 and 1995. Vegetation has been developing in much of the area for at least a few years, so the Division has had the opportunity to make some judgments whether it appears vegetation establishment will be successful. However, there is no quantitative data at this time.

Most of Hardscrabble Canyon was gouged to decrease the amount of runoff and sedimentation and increase water retention and plant growth. This technique has been used successfully at other sites, and so far it appears to be promoting good vegetation establishment and growth at this site. The site has numerous shrubs and forbs in addition to the traditionally more-easily-established grasses, and this has created a fairly diverse landscape.

There are some cuts and highwalls, especially in the No. 4 Mine area, that were not fully backfilled. Relative to the entire site, these areas are small. Typically, little vegetation becomes established in areas like this, but because other areas of the mine end up being flatter, these other areas have more vegetation. This increased plant growth in other areas tends to make up for the limited amount of growth on the cuts and highwalls.

Vegetation is not yet well established in areas redisturbed in the fall of 1999. Also, there is an area near the old scalehouse where high soil salt levels were found, and the vegetation in this area does not look as dense or healthy as it does in other areas. In general, however, the Division considers the probability of revegetation success to be high. The applicant used more soil cover than originally planned, covered refuse materials at least four feet deep, bought seed from reputable dealers, and used the best mulching and surface preparation techniques of which the Division is aware. Plant growth has reflected the care taken in reclamation, and there is no reason to believe this will not continue.

Findings:

Information in the proposal is adequate to meet the requirements of this section of the regulations. Considering the reclamation methods used, the Division considers the probability of revegetation success to be high.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The applicant needs to correct one minor problem in the proposed newspaper advertisement and to submit proof of publication when advertising is completed. The probability of future revegetation success is high, and it is not likely the applicant will need to correct problems with the vegetation.