



# State of Utah

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
DIVISION OF OIL, GAS AND MINING

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## DIVISION OF OIL GAS & MINING FIELD VISIT FORM TECHNICAL

**Date:** September 9, 1999

**Time:** 10:30 AM to 3:00 PM

**Mine:** Skyline

**File Number:** ACT/007/005, Folder #2

**DOGM Staff:** Paul Baker

**Other Attendees:** Gary Taylor, Keith Zobell, Chris Hansen

**Purpose:** To look at revegetation success standard options, to discuss the next steps in reclamation of the conveyor cut slopes, and to discuss whether it was necessary to continue maintaining some silt fences along the conveyor.

**Observations:** Vegetation on the conveyor cut slope nearest the mine continues to progress. A rock fall toward the east end of this cut took out nearly all the vegetation for about a 20-foot stretch and nearly took out the conveyor.

The most difficult cut to reclaim is the largest one on the far east end of the area with cuts. It was originally to be a transfer area for coal from both Skyline and the Belina (now White Oak) Mines. The biggest part of this cut has a shale outcrop with little vegetation. The bench below the cut has about 40-50% vegetative cover, and this extends about one-fourth of the way up the cut. The most successful plant species in this area appeared to be rush wheatgrass, cicer milkvetch, blueleaf aster, bitterbrush, and smooth brome.

The silt fences are just below a few of the conveyor support structures toward the lower end of the conveyor. Vegetation around these structures is essentially the same as on the surrounding slopes. There was some coal and sediment trapped by the silt fences, but it appeared the sediment was not so much from the disturbances as from surrounding areas. I felt the sediment was inhibiting vegetation establishment.

**Recommendations/Conclusions:** The reclamation plan indicates the conveyor cut slopes will not be backfilled. The biggest problem with this is that it is probably impossible to meet the revegetation success standards in the plan unless they are backfilled and topsoil placed on the slopes. The backfill material is in the state highway, so nothing is available to backfill the cuts

Page 2  
ACT/007/005  
September 15, 1999

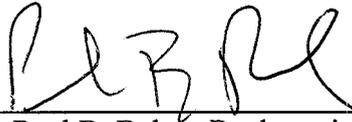
even if it would be possible to achieve the required safety factors. However, the mining and reclamation plan needs to contain a discussion of this situation and demonstrate why backfilling is not feasible.

On the upper cut slope, it appears vegetation has become established in most available locations except where the rockfall occurred. The operator could continue to spread some seed in this area, but the majority of revegetation efforts should be concentrated elsewhere. Between the uppermost and lowermost cuts are some smaller cuts that could use some transplants and seed.

On the lower cut, I feel there is little chance of establishing much vegetation in the shaley areas. On the lower slopes of this cut, it looks like vegetation is struggling because of the amount of sediment coming from the upper slopes. Some of the species doing well and giving significant cover in this area are dicots like bitterbrush, cicer milkvetch, and blueleaf aster. We feel it would be good to try to encourage more of these plants through seeding and transplanting.

The operator needs to find an appropriate revegetation success standard for these slopes. Reference areas should have similar soils, aspects and other characteristics compared with disturbed areas, so, assuming it will not be possible to backfill and topsoil the cut slopes, the operator needs to find something with a rock outcrop.

I believe the silt fences are no longer functional for the disturbed areas near the conveyor supports although they do trap some sediment from adjacent areas. Because this is inhibiting revegetation, I think it would be best if the silt fences were removed. Before removing them, however, the small amounts of coal and sediment should be removed. Also, this will require a plan modification.

Signature:  on September 15, 1999  
Paul B. Baker, Reclamation Biologist

cc: Steve Demczak, Mike Suflita  
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