

0001



FAX TRANSMITTAL

*C/007/005 Incoming*



FOREST SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE  
and PRICE RANGER DISTRICT  
599 WEST PRICE RIVER DRIVE  
PRICE UT 84501

PHONE: (435) 637-2817  
FAX: (435) 637-4940

TO: Paul Baker FAX #: 801-359-3940

FROM: Carter Reed

SUBJECT: FWS Letter on Mod. of Lease U-044076

TOTAL PAGES INCLUDING COVER PAGE: 3

COMMENTS:

*As requested.*

Kodak Aaron



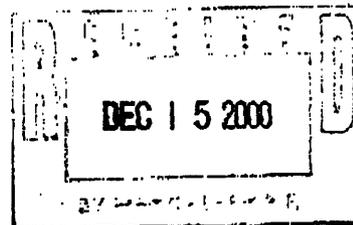
United States Department of the Interior  
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

UTAH FIELD OFFICE  
LINCOLN PLAZA  
145 EAST 1300 SOUTH, SUITE 404  
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84115

In Reply Refer To  
(CO/KS/NE/UT)

December 14, 2000

Elaine J. Zieroth  
Forest Supervisor  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service  
Manti-La Sal National Forest  
599 West Price River Drive  
Price, Utah 84501



RE: Federal Coal Lease U-044076, Proposal to Modify, Canyon Fuel Company, LLC, Emery County

Dear Mr. Carter:

We have received your notice of November 21, 2000, concerning the referenced Federal Coal Lease modification. The applicant proposes to add 121.5 acres excluded from the lease when it was issued in 1965. The lease modification area lies within the riparian corridor of the headwaters of Huntington Creek, upstream from the Electric Lake Reservoir. The Forest Service (FS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are proposing to add the area to the current lease and to approve full-support mining to allow recovery of Federal coal reserves and increase recovery of coal in adjacent lease areas. We are providing the following comments for your consideration.

The application materials submitted to this office do not contain the information that the headwaters of Huntington Creek are considered an important fish spawning area for the Yellowstone cutthroat population of Electric Lake. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) believes there is potential for impacts to both aquatic and riparian habitats and this spawning area. As subsidence has already occurred in Burnout Canyon, site of another tributary to Electric Lake, we have a reasonable expectation that similar subsidence may occur under the headwaters of Huntington Creek when mining commences. Additionally, Canyon Fuel Company has proposed to engage in longwall mining under a third tributary to Electric Lake, James Creek. We feel this may result in significant cumulative impacts to the natural hydrology. Subsidence cracks may expose previously unweathered geologic strata and subtly change the aquatic chemical parameters. While we understand that monitoring of surface water flow is already in place and may be expanded, the existence, or filling, of subsidence cracks may also alter the ratio of groundwater to surface runoff of water reaching the streams. Surface water may go

**This is your future. Don't leave it blank. - Support the 2000 Census**

underground, or groundwater may surface, perhaps including mining drainage water. In addition to changing the volume of water in the stream, this could alter the aquatic chemical characteristics as well as have an impact on water temperatures. A change in any of these parameters could affect the willingness and success of fish spawning.

The potential for impact to approximately one mile of an important fish spawning stream, riparian areas and over one hundred acres of watershed is sufficient reason for careful forethought to avoid harm or risk. In this case, the scope of possible disturbance appears to involve two of three tributaries to a lake with a high-value fishery. Therefore, we feel a more thorough analysis of potential impacts to stream and riparian habitats is necessary. We urge a full evaluation of cumulative impacts of all activities in the catchment basin for Electric Lake. Because of the important spawning area, the likelihood of subsidence, and cumulative impacts, we recommend that the lease not be modified for expansion to this area at the present time.

We recommend implementation, completion and assessment of the monitoring and surveying program on Burnout Creek and James Creek, proposed by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) and Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining (DOG M), prior to making a decision on the coal lease modification proposal. We urge the addition of Huntington Creek to the study, as a control stream. Data collected should include, but not be limited to: water flows (volume and frequency), temperature and chemistry; surveys for algae, riparian vegetation, macro-invertebrates and fish. Physical parameters and algae data should be collected no less than monthly. Other biological data should be collected no less than annually. The program should continue for a minimum of five years after the cessation of mining activities.

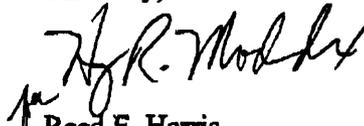
If, based on monitoring results, a decision is made to approve expansion of the lease, anticipated detrimental impacts to aquatic and riparian habitats should be fully and appropriately mitigated. A mitigation plan should be developed in coordination with the DWR.

In summation, we recommend:

- the lease not be modified for expansion at Huntington Creek at this time.
- completion of studies on Burnout, James and Huntington Creeks prior to revisiting the proposal to modify the federal coal lease.
- if the lease modification is approved, potential detrimental impacts be fully and appropriately mitigated.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this application. If you have any questions or need further information please contact Diana Whittington, Ecologist, at (801) 524-5001 ext. 128.

Sincerely,



Reed E. Harris

Utah Field Supervisor

cc: UDWR-SLC  
UDOGM-SLC