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IN REPLY REFER TO:

# United States Department of the Interior

## OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING

Reclamation and Enforcement

1999 Broadway, Suite 3320

Denver, Colorado 80202-5733

August 14, 2002

Ms. Mary Ann Wright  
Associate Director, Mining  
Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Oil, Gas and Mining  
1594 West North Temple, suite 1210  
PO Box 145801  
Salt Lake City, Utah

*Incoming  
a/c 007/005*

Re: Request for Assistance, Skyline Mine, Canyon Fuel Company

We searched our files pertaining to the Office of Surface Mining's approval of the mine plan for the Skyline Mine proposed at that time by Coastal States Energy and Getty Mineral Resources. Enclosed is the only document in the files relating to our determination regarding alluvial valley floors. We could not find a field investigation report or any additional backup. Nor could we find the names of the reviewers involved.

If you have any questions, call me at 303-844-1400, ext. 1424.

Sincerely,

*James Fulton*

James Fulton  
Chief, Denver Field Division

Enclosure

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DIVISION OF  
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SKYLINE MINES, CARBON AND EMERY COUNTIES, UTAH

Proposed By

COASTAL STATES ENERGY COMPANY AND GETTY MINERAL RESOURCES COMPANY

FEDERAL COAL LEASES - #U020305

U044076

U0142235

U0147570

U073120

CONTENTS OF MINE PLAN RECOMMENDATION  
PACKAGE

1. Memorandum from Director to Assistant Secretary for Energy and Minerals recommending approval with stipulations.
2. Memorandum from Regional Director to Assistant Secretary for Energy and Minerals recommending approval with stipulations.
3. Draft Memorandum from Assistant Secretary for Energy and Minerals to Regional Director.
4. Standard Stipulations.
5. Special Stipulations.
6. Technical Analysis.
7. Environmental Assessment.
8. Concurrence Letters.
9. Notice of Availability of the Mining and Reclamation Plan for Public Review.
10. Notice of Availability of Pending Decision as submitted to the Federal Register.

Submitted to Director, OSM  
From Region V, OSM

Questions may be directed to  
Regional Director, OSM

Com: 303/837-5421 FTS: 327-5421

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785.19(c) Alluvial Valley Floors

The applicant has attempted to present precipitation and evaporation data for the area of the propose mine in order to demonstate that the area proposed to be disturbed by underground mining and associated facilities is not arid or semiarid. Section 785.19(c)(1) of the permanent program requires that alluvial valley floor regulations be applied to operations within a valley holding area includes any stream in arid or semiarid regions of the United States. Therefore, the applicant's intent was to demonstrate a water excess (i.e., that precipitation exceeds evapotranspiration) so that the AVF requirements would not have to be addressed. The approach used by the applicant did not account for monthly precipitation inputs versus evaporation but rather looked at yearly totals. The use of moisture by plants during the growing season does not relate well to yearly total moisture balances expecially in an area such as the proposed mine site where most of the precipitation falls as snow.

The annual consumptive use by native riparian plants in the area varies from approximately 13 inches for riparian grasses (SCS-modified Blaney-Criddle method, p.4-85 Volume 3 of the mine application) to approximately 16.5 inches for silver sagebrush (from Stargess, 1977 p 4-85 Vol. 3 of the mine application). During 1978 2.5 and 1.75 inches of precipitation was measured at Scofield (el. 7720 ft.) and Scofield down (el. 7630 ft.) respectively (located in te vicinity of the mine el. 8,000-8,800H), during the growing season (May-September). Similarly the precipitation data colleted by Coastal States Energy Company at a meteorological station located near the proposed mine site, showed 3.77 inches of rainfall during the growing season (May-September). The on site data also demonstrates a moisture efficit during the growing season.

OSM concludes that the vicinity of the proposed Skyline mine is arid or semiarid due to moisture deficiencies in the growing season and it is appropriate to apply the alluvial valley floor criteria of sections 785.19 and 822.

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Coastal states Energy did not address the alluvial valley floor regulations any further than described in the preceding narrative. The following discussion reflects OSM's attempt to analyse the potential for an AVF in the adjacent area of the proposed Skyline mining operation.

The month of the Eccles Creek Valley (approximately 23 acres) and large portions of the Huntington Creek Valley (approximately 145 acres) appear to meet the geomorphic criteria of AVF (streamlaid deposits of sufficient acreage ~~to from~~). The valleys of Eccles Creek and Huntington Creek are considered by OSM to be the two valleys that may be affected by the Skyline mining operations therefore these valleys are considered in the adjacent area of the proposed mine and it is appropriate to apply the criteria of sections 785.19 and 822 regarding AVF's to these valleys.

OSM contacted the SCS (James Nelson, Castle Dale; Utah,) the Forest Service (Dennis Kelly, hydrologist, Manti-LaSal National Forest, Price Utah); the SCS (Gary Moreau, Price, Utah); and the Utah Department of Natural Resources, Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining (Tom Suchoski) regarding the presence of flood irrigation practices in the region of the proposed Skyline Mine. Mr. Moreau identified some irrigation activities in Upper Huntington Valley; however, the general opinion from the persons that were questioned, was that the growing season was too short to justify extensive irrigated agricultural valleys. The hydrologic balance will not be affected for Huntington Creek (see Subsidence) during the first five years of mining.

OSM concludes that due to the short growing season in the vicinity of the proposed Skyline Mine and the total lack of farming practices in the area, the valleys of Huntington Creek and Eccles Creek are not alluvial valley floors.

Although the valleys of Eccles Creek and Huntington Creek have not been designated avf's damage to the hydrologic balance of the mine plan and adjacent area must be minimized and long term changes in that balance must be prevented. The reader is referred to sections 817.41-817.57 of this technical analyses for a discussion of the mines affect on the hydrologic balance.

Summary: Will Comply

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783.14 Geology Description

A. Description of the Existing Environment

The proposed Skyline coal mine is about 23 miles northwest of Price, Utah, at the northern end of the Wasatch Plateau. The terrain is mountainous, and the proposed portal of the mine is at an elevation of approximately 8700 feet at

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