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Incoming

Price

Ann Advertiser

May 30, 2002

ester Joel Frandsen. "Needless to say, we're asking everyone to be especially careful with all forms of fire."

The alert comes at the end of a record setting dry winter and spring. The fire alert will remain in effect until rescinded.

Locally, the alert covers all of Carbon and Emery counties, with the exception of national forest lands in the Manti-LaSal Range.

"I expect they will be joining the alert soon," said Rudy

happen here - but it could, said Sandoval.

Fireworks pose a major concern around the middle of the summer. But this time of year, fires are often caused by people burning trash or debris.

A number of recent blazes in the county have resulted from the burning of fields and ditches.

Officials believe one of the primary causes may have been children playing with fire or matches.



The stage one alert prohibits open burning southern half of the state. Local officials believe other combustible materials may have caused the fires.

With the dry conditions and plenty of fuel available, the fires could turn into tragedies with a loss of life, major damage or both.

OK

Skyline engineer, county committee discuss 'ancient' water in coal mine

By RICHARD SHAW
Staff reporter

An ancient water source discovered in the Pleasant Valley area could offer interesting possibilities when dealing with related issues in the county.

For example, the source could possibly resolve the 60-year-old dispute regarding water between Carbon and Sanpete counties.

Last year, production at Skyline mine had to be shut down for nearly a month when the company encountered a great deal of water that had to be handled before coal removal operations could continue.

The company had to install pumps and found that it was removing almost 8,000 gallons per minute from the mine, which was then and is now flowing into Scofield Reservoir.

"There is a lot of water there and it was a big problem," explained mine geologist Mark Bunnell during the first meeting of the county water development

board last Thursday.

"By using carbon dating techniques, we have determined this water to be 6,000 to 12,000 years old. It is ancient water and there is a lot of it," added Bunnell.

Bunnell described how the company had been digging about 800 feet below Electric Lake when the water started to flow into the mine, causing the shutdown.

The committee members asked if the water was coming from the lake.

"We aren't definitive about that yet. But the amount of radioactivity in the water is negligible," responded Bunnell. "That would mean it is probably pretty old water."

Certain elements of radioactivity that are primarily produced by atomic bomb blasts generally show up in stable amounts in what is considered "modern" water - water from the surface of the planet.

Since atomic explosions have been going on for less than 60 years, water found without the

elements have been sealed off from the surface, probably for a long time.

The mine is working with Utah Power & Light to determine whether the water in question is leaking from the reservoir. A dye test may be used to determine that, added Bunnell.

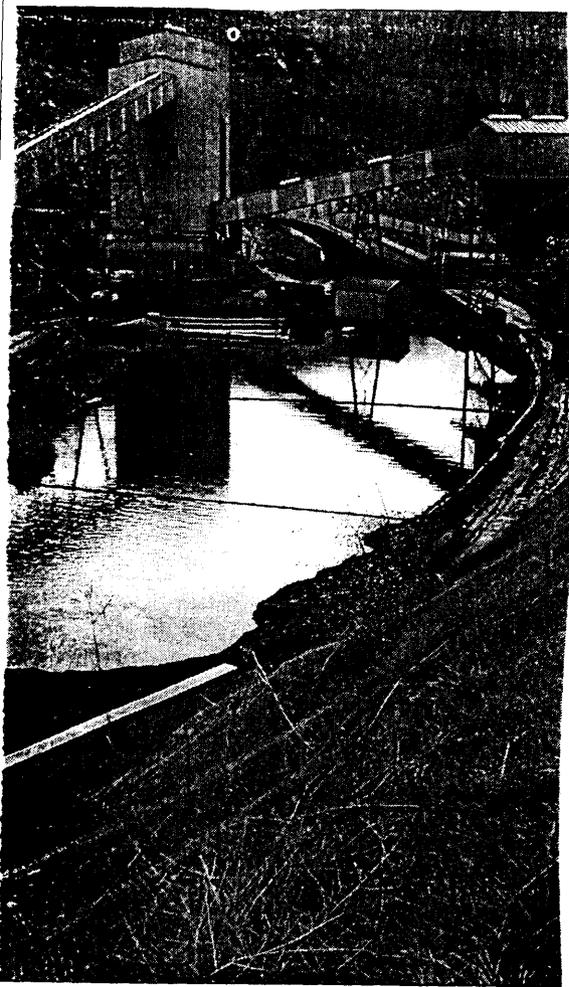
The water is also appearing in another sector where mining has been started - a section that heads into Sanpete County.

"Right now, we are going to have to move that operation because there is so much water," indicated Bunnell. "That means we are going to move into the old Winter Quarters mining area north of where we are now. That was reported very dry when the mines there were shut down."

One of the interesting things about the water is that it seems to be crossing over into all three counties in the area, Sanpete, Emery and Carbon.

Due to the interest in the possible water source, commissioners from all three counties will

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Skyline mine pumps 8,000 gallons of water per minute into Scofield Reservoir.

Discuss 'ancient' water in mine:

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be meeting at the site to discuss the issue and what could be done to possibly utilize the water.

If the source could be developed and there is enough, it could eliminate Sanpete from pursuing the Gooseberry-Narrows project that has put it at odds with Carbon County for more than a half a century.

According to Bunnell, the geology in the area around Pleasant Valley located within Carbon County's boundaries may contain additional water sources like the Skyline mining operation encountered.

"I'm not a hydrologist, but based on the geology of the area, there very well could be more water in similar formations all around Pleasant Valley," commented the mining engineer.

But water users in Carbon County shouldn't get their hopes up too high yet, accord-

ing to Bunnell and the board.

First, the water is very expensive to remove from the mine.

Pumping the liquid from the depths of the underground shafts where the water occurs is extremely costly, pointed out Bunnell.

The engineer cited the expense the mine had incurred when the company had to drill a well in James Canyon to remove water.

In addition, the ancient water in question - like all non-replenishable resources - has a limit.

"It has a limit," indicated Mark Page, state water engineer after the meeting. "If it were tapped, it would run out someday. There is only so much of it."

All parties involved in the matter agreed that additional study will be needed to determine the magnitude and extent of the ground water basin in the Pleasant Valley area.

Counties discuss water at Skyline

By RICHARD SHAW
Staff reporter

A meeting last Friday between representatives of Carbon, Emery and Sanpete counties at the Skyline mine site offices may result in unprecedented action by the three governments on the subject of water.

"After a lengthy discussion this morning, we made some tentative decisions about how to begin to explore the possibilities that this new resource can offer us all," commented Carbon Commissioner Bill Krompel on Friday afternoon.

"As a group, the counties are going to ask for some money from the community impact board to do a feasibility study on the possibilities for drilling up to six wells in the area of Flat Canyon to dewater the coal field in the area," continued Krompel.

The situation with the water being a problem in Skyline mine began last year when miners ran into a water pocket while removing the black resource about 800 feet below Electric Lake.

Within a couple of days, that section of the mine was flooded and the company began searching for ways to handle the problem.

The mine was closed to regular operations for a few weeks because of the water, but eventually the company was able to place some large pumps in the mine itself as well as drill a well from the surface in James Canyon.

When pumping operations began, it was estimated by the company that the pumps were throwing out between 812,000 gallons of water per minute. The level finally dropped enough for coal removal operations to begin again, but the problem persists in the area and another area where the company intends to move operations at some time in the future.

One interesting thing about the water that is being pumped out of the mine is its age. According to some preliminary carbon dating tests that have been done the water could be between 6,000 to 12,000 years old.

Concerns about the water possibly draining down from Electric Lake have also been somewhat allayed because tests for the tritium, a trace isotope of hydrogen which is produced by hydrogen bomb tests, and which shows up in all surface water on the planet, have showed very little in the water being pumped out.

The effort by the three counties, while seemingly a possible solution to a water battle that has ensued between Carbon and Sanpete for more than one-half a century, is much more than that alone.

"The mine is presently break-

ing just a little over even on the costs they are incurring because of this water," said Krompel.

"They will be moving out of that section of the mine soon, but the long term future of Skyline may very well lay in what can be done to alleviate the water problem."

In the next few months, the company will be closing down the section where the water is a problem and will be moving into the old Winter Quarters mine area, where it is reported that the conditions are much drier.

The coal in that area will keep operations going for five to six years, at the rate of about four million tons per year.

However, the next section the company will be moving into after that is under Flat Canyon, and it appears to be wetter than the present area in which they are mining.

"The company pays over \$1 million dollars a year in property taxes to the three counties in which it operates right now," pointed out Krompel. "The mine employs over 300 people in the tri-county area and, in addition, pays millions of dollars a year in mineral lease royalties, part of which comes back to all the counties involved. The possibility of finding more water for use in the area would be an extra to keeping those jobs, the mineral lease moneys and property taxes for the counties involved."

But to begin with the water is the problem and an opportunity at the same time. The water is locked up in a formation called the Star Point sandstone formation and the area it occurs in averages about 700 feet in depth. It is bounded by faults. Rough preliminary estimates of the size of the water field is about 75 square miles.

Krompel pointed out that with all the water that the mine is presently pumping out, quite an impact has been made on Scofield Reservoir this past year.

"I talked with Mark Page (state water engineer) this morning and he told me that 75 percent of the inflow into the reservoir this year has come from what the mine has been pumping," said Krompel. "That's about 15,000 acre feet this year. Without that think of the trouble we would be in."

But the present water flow from the mine cannot go on forever. As the mine begins to move out of the section it is presently in, the amount of water pumped out will be decreased until it becomes minimal.

For the present, the water is being taken out of the mine and flows into Eccles Creek, then on into Clear Creek and ends up in

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Sun Advocate Price, Utah Tuesday June 4, 2002

2004.

Discuss water:

(Continued from page 1)
Scofield Reservoir.

The water being pumped out of the James Canyon well is being fed into Electric Lake.

"Removing this water is not cheap," said Krompel. "The company tells me that it is costing them a great deal of money to run those huge pumps twenty four hours a day."

The study that the counties want to conduct would accomplish two primary objectives.

• First, the study would determine whether the aquifer is isolate unto itself.

Even though preliminary studies into the situation have indicated that the aquifer is isolate, more work needs to be done to be absolutely certain of the fact.

• Second, the evaluation would estimate some costs involved in coming up with a feasibility study on actually drilling wells in the area top dewater the formation.

The meeting last Friday not only had good representation from the three counties, but also involved officials from the state as well.

The funding for the study may come from not only state sources, but also federal revenues.

Receiving federal money usually requires recipients to do some kind of match on the funding.

Once some of the basic details are worked out, the group will schedule a public meeting to accept comments from citizens on the project.

How along U.S. 6

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ambulance transported Burke to Castlevew, with scrapes and cuts and a sore ankle. Burke remained under observation at the hospital until Friday.

ation water program

sults additional expenses for Price city.

Price's priority is to keep water flowing. So when the city gets a call indicating that a grate is blocked or a ditch is flooding, no matter water time it is, crews can respond to clear up the problem.

Besides the obvious problems of keeping the water flowing, city crews also run into situations such as:

