

*Internal  
c/002/0005*

*Sun Advocate  
July 17, 2003*

# Water studies reveal different perspectives

By RICHARD SHAW  
Staff reporter

Skyline Mine may be getting ready to be idle as far as coal production is concerned, but the water filling the mine, and the pumps pulling it out are not slowing down. But where the water is coming from is still somewhat of a mystery, despite two studies that have been done.

In July 2001, miners working in an area of the mine under Flat Canyon hit water that turned from a trickle into a flood by the next day.

The mine had to be closed for an extended period of time so that water could be pumped out and a well could be drilled. That first well was named JC 1. It took about a month to complete and to start pumping water. When it did start, it sent out 4,000 gallons of water a minute that flowed into Electric Lake.

Water was also being pumped out of the mine portal area and that was also producing thousands of gallons a minute that flowed into Eccles

Creek, which eventually lead to Scofield Reservoir.

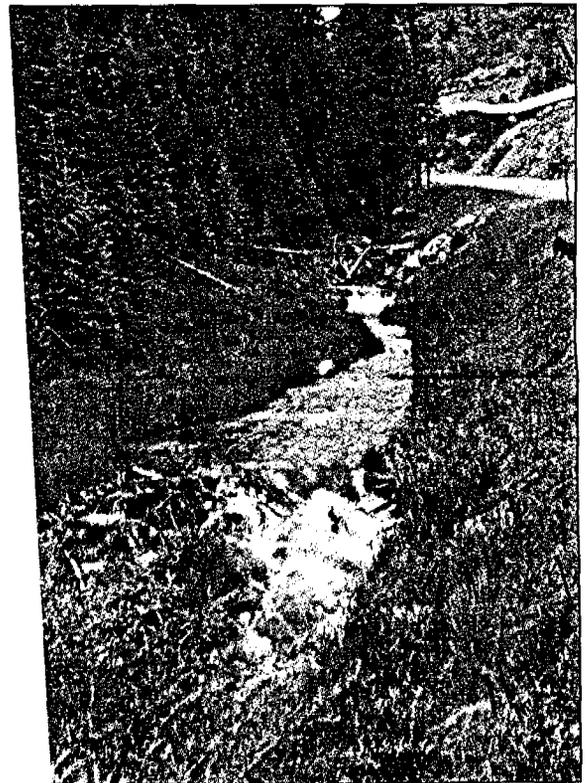
Then the company drilled JC 2, but it apparently didn't go directly into the water source and could only produce about 300 gallons per minute.

Recently, PacifiCorp has drilled another well in James Canyon called JC-3 that will begin pumping water this month. According to sources, that well should produce between four and five thousand gallons per minute.

When the mine filled with water there was a great deal of controversy about where it was coming from. Some said that at about the same time Electric Lake started losing thousands of gallons per minute, and that the water was mainly coming from that source.

However, initial tests on the water showed that tritium levels (radioactive elements produced by atomic bomb tests that permeate all surface water on the planet) gave evidence to the fact that the water was actually

*(Continued on page 4A)*



RICHARD SHAW - SUN ADVOCATE  
r rushing down Eccles Creek just below Skyline Mine.

## with subdivision

# Skyline Mine water studies reveal different perspectives

(Continued from page 1A)

act that the water was actually from an ancient underground water source that had not been contaminated.

Since then tritium levels have risen, giving some credence to the assertion that the underground water resource that is sending the water into the mine is at the least being recharged by a surface source.

At a recent meeting with county commissioners from Carbon, Emery and Sanpete counties, Utah Power and Light presented a \$600,000 study that states that Electric Lake is the source of the water.

The presentation to the commissioners also included some video tape footage taken by divers who went into fissures on the bottom of the lake and show that the water movement into the splits in the floor of the reservoir is quite rapid.

However, sources say that on October 1, Skyline will release their own study which cost over \$1,000,000 that will show that the majority of water is from an underground aquifer.

An extremely interested and involved party in this is the Utah Department of Oil and Gas. They have gotten involved in terms of study and possible mitigation problems that may result from the water going into the mine.

Preliminary information about Skyline's report also reportedly shows that any surface water leakage has been mitigated by the drilling of the wells.

The total amount of water that has been pumped out of the mine since August 2001 equals approximately 8,800 gallons per minute and that water has had a huge impact on Scofield Reservoir.

Some estimates put the wa-

ter that was pumped out of the mine and into Eccles Creek at 30 percent more water in the reservoir last year that would have been there from the accumulated snowpack. That water helped to mitigate some of the effects of the drought last summer.

However, with a combination of the idling of the mine and the wells pumping water into Electric Lake, that flow has decreased dramatically and will drop even more over the next several months.

At present only about 3,000 gallons per minute are flowing into the Scofield drainage and by January of next year it will drop to 500 to 1,000 per minute.

According to Carbon County Commissioner Bill Krompel, the money that the three counties affected by the water situation received from the Community Impact Board last year to study

the water situation is being held in reserve to see what the present studies lead to.

"I know it is pretty much the consensus of all the commissioners from all three counties to hold onto that money until the other studies are evaluated," he explained.

The problem is that various geologists have different feelings about the water and its source.

The \$600,000 grant was originally awarded for the counties to study the area and see if the water came from an underground aquifer that could be tapped as a source for all three counties.

In addition, it was to help to find a way to solve the problem of keeping Skyline Mine open, so nearly 300 jobs in Carbon, Emery and Sanpete counties would not be lost.

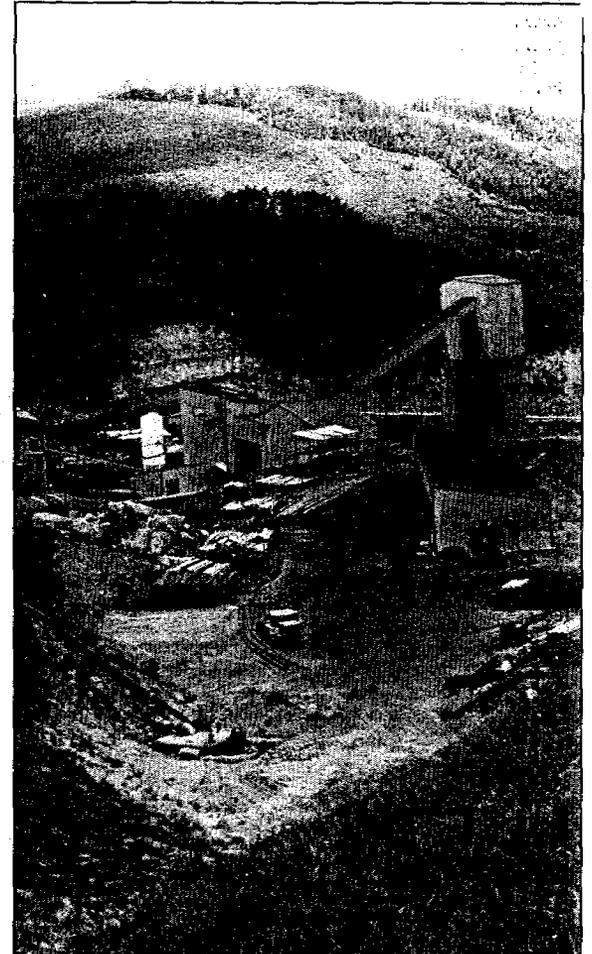
But with the announcement

by Skyline Mines parent company, Arch Coal, concerning the idling of the mine by next year, much has changed.

The company stated at the time of the announcement that the mine was being idled because of a weak coal market,

and that the action had little to do with the water in the mine or the cost of pumping it.

Present operations are concentrated in the Winter Quarter area, a mining region that has a few water problems.



RICHARD SHAW - SUN ADVOCATE

Skyline Mine up Eccles Canyon is soon to be idled but the water problems will remain if the mine is not continually pumped out.

For Details, check your church or work bulletin board, the library or [pricecityutah.com/](http://pricecityutah.com/) news and events.



## #3 Step to PREPAREDNESS

### TO KNOW

Following an earthquake, turn off your gas if 1) there is structure damage to your home 2) if you smell natural gas or hear it escaping 3) if there is fire near the gas line and/or appliances. Do not jeopardize your safety.

# Sun Advocate

The voice of Carbon County since 1892

**ADMINISTRATION**  
Publisher  
Ken Larson

**ADVERTISING**  
Advertising  
Bob Henline  
Jenni Fasselin  
Patti O'Neil  
Classifieds, Legals  
Lynda Barnett

**EDITORIAL**  
Editor  
Lynnda Johnson  
Reporter  
Richard Shaw  
Reporter  
Karen Basso

**OFFICE**  
Office Manager  
Linda Thayne  
Receptionist  
Lynda Barnett

Telephone: (435) 637-0732.  
Fax: (435) 637-2716.

Postmaster: Send change of address to 845 East Main Street, Price, Utah 84501.

Classifieds deadline: Monday at 10 a.m. for Tuesday's publication and Wednesday at 10 a.m. for Thursday's publication.

Subscription rates: 50 cents per copy, \$37 per year in Carbon and Emery counties, \$40 in Utah and \$54 outside of Utah per year by mail.

Publication No. (USPS 174-960) issued twice a week at Price, Utah. Periodical postage paid at Price, Utah, and at additional mailing office PO Box 589, Castle Dale, Utah 84513.

Internet: <http://www.sunad.com/>  
e-mail: [editor@sunad.com](mailto:editor@sunad.com), [ads@sunad.com](mailto:ads@sunad.com)