

MemorandumDEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENTMoab District
Price River Resource Area

IN REPLY REFER TO:

1700/2800
(U-601)
(U-39979)**To** : Area Manager, Price River

Date: October 16, 1978

FROM : Soil Scientist, Price River**SUBJECT**: Plateau Mining Company Access Road EAR

The proposed mining access road would have major environmental impacts, but because of the limited scope of the project and the need for such a road, it is recommended that the proposal be allowed.

No formal ES is recommended because impacts that would occur have been adequately determined.

I would like to have the following mitigating measures included as part of the Land Report stipulations:

1. Road construction will not be allowed between November 1 and May 15 in order to mitigate the disturbance to wintering deer and bald eagles.
2. The grantee will submit a reclamation and stabilization plan acceptable to authorized officer for the sideslopes, prior to the commencement of construction activities. Plans should include types of stabilization structures, seeding, fertilizing, and mulching methods.

mark a. moekiewig



ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT RECORD
FOR PLATEAU MINING COMPANY
ACCESS ROAD (U39779)



Prepared by:

Mark A. Mackiewicz, Soil Scientist, Price River Resource Area

Signatures:

Mark A. Mackiewicz
Team Leader

10-16-78
Date

Reviewed by:

John W. Coleman
Environmental Coordinator

11/7/78
Date

Approved by:

George H. Petermel
Area Manager, Price River
acting

11/7/78
Date

I. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Plateau Mining Company has proposed to construct a mine access road to a new portal scheduled to open within the next three years. The road would have a gravel and rock base and an asphalt surface. The State of Utah has indicated that they would like to have the proposed road left open after mining operations have ceased. The road would be approximately 12,350 feet in length, with 4,760.92 feet crossing public lands. The company has requested a 100-foot wide right-of-way, 50 feet of each side of a centerline. Approximately 10.9 acres would be consumed by the right-of-way. The public land is located in Section 9 of T. 15 S., R. 8 E., SLB&M. (See attached map.) The area is located in the Wattis Planning Unit of the Price River Resource Area. Granting the right-of-way would be consistent with recommendations for the planning unit made in the Wattis URA-MFP. The construction of the road would not conflict with BLM plans for the area. Construction on public lands would commence immediately after permit issuance, and would take about two years for completion.

The only alternative to the proposed action, if no action were taken, would be to upgrade the existing road. This would be accomplished by lowering the grade and widening the road.

Current interim regulations of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement stipulate that the mean grade shall not exceed the allowable maximum of fifteen percent. The present road greatly exceeds this specification and would require a great deal of change to meet specifications.

The present road is located on a north aspect, which creates quite a problem with snow removal during the winter months.

Upgrading the existing road would be a major construction effort requiring the closure of the mine for several months for safety purposes.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

The proposed road would be located on the side of a steep rugged mountain with slopes ranging from 40 to 60 percent. Average elevation is 8,000 feet. Several sandstone rock outcrops are present on the sideslopes.

The area has been given a VRM contrast rating of IV. There are many intrusions associated with mining operations including coal piles, rock, and maintenance structures. The proposal would not be adverse to VRM objectives.

Soils consist of light-colored shallow to moderately deep stoney loams. The soil is stable where slopes have not been disturbed with little evidence of erosion. Where disturbance has occurred, soils are rapidly eroding. No live water is present in the proposal area.

Air quality appears to be good. Wind blows dust from existing roadfill slopes and coal storage and waste piles degrading the air quality of the area.

Vegetation consists of varying amounts of Indian ricegrass, Oryzopsis hymenoides; Bluebunch wheatgrass, Agropyron spicatum; Stansbury cliffrose, Cowania mexicana stansburiana; Gambel oak, Quercus gambelli; miscellaneous forbs, a few Douglas Fir, Pinyon and Juniper trees, and some mountain mahogany, Cecocarpus ledifolius ledifolius. Vegetation appears to be in good condition with good ground cover. No threatened or endangered plant species have been identified in the proposal area.

Over 361 vertebrate wildlife species are known to inhabit the area of the proposed road.

The endangered Bald eagle Haliaeetus leucocephalus and the threatened Golden eagle use the area during winter months (November 15 to March 15 each year). The Division of Wildlife Resources has designated an area which includes the lower limits of the proposed road along the foothills north toward the Gorden Creek Wildlife Management area, as crucial-critical wintering grounds for Bald eagles.

The area to be traversed by the proposed road is a high priority deer winter range at lower levels, and valuable summer deer and elk range at higher elevations.

The area is not adjacent to a 5,000 contiguous acre, roadless area. Due to the vast amount of coal mining activity in the area, it would have no wilderness potential.

No areas of critical environmental concern have been identified in the area of the proposal.

The area is not in a flood plain and the proposal would not contribute to the flood hazard potential.

A cultural clearance report was received on October 10, 1978. There were no significant findings. (see attached report)

III. ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Anticipated Impacts

Vegetation along the route of the proposed road would be highly impacted by the construction of this road. There would be a loss of approximately 5.46 acres of vegetation due to actual removal in addition to the indeterminate amount lost by being covered by rock and soil slumping off the sideslopes.

Soil productivity would be lost due to the loss of the most fertile upper horizon. Topsoil could not be saved and stockpiled due to the steepness of these slopes.

Vegetative removal and soil disturbance by heavy machinery would greatly accelerate erosion. High runoff on these barren slopes could cause rill and eventually gully erosion to occur. Barren soil on the tallus slopes would be highly susceptible to wind erosion. A large amount of blowing dust could be observed blowing from the tallus slopes below the present road.

Wildlife habitat along the proposed road, rated as crucial-critical and high priority, would be lost due to the construction of the road. Wildlife habitat would be disturbed for a short amount of time due to construction activities.

Landscape character would be greatly altered due to the construction of this road. Little could be done to conceal the visibility of the road due to the steep terrain. Though the proposed road would greatly alter the landscape, the significance of the impact to visibility would be minor.

The only people that would view this area are Plateau employees. The road would have a positive benefit. It would provide safe access to the Plateau proposed new portal.

B. Mitigating Measures

Every effort should be made to stabilize the sideslopes so that a vegetative stand capable of reducing soil erosion by water and mass movement is established.

An adequate properly functioning water diversion structure designed to reduce slope sloughing should be installed. Several measures including the use of stakes and logs placed horizontally along the slopes have proven to be successful.

In critical areas such as this, excelsior blankets have given excellent results in helping to establish vegetation. These blanket mulches come in 3- to 5-foot wide, 180-foot long rolls. An area is first hydroseeded and fertilized then the mulch rolled over the seeded area and staked in place.

Road construction at the lower elevation should not be allowed between November 1 and May 15 in order to mitigate the disturbance to wintering deer and eagles.

C. Residual Impacts

Soil productivity would be lost on approximately 5.46 acres. There would also be an equal acreage loss in vegetation. The negative visual impact of this road would remain. An indeterminate amount of wind and water erosion would take place until stabilization measures take hold.

D. Relationship Between Short-Term Use and Long-Term Productivity

The long-term soil and vegetative productivity of at least 5.46 acres would be lost.

Use of the area by wildlife would be decreased as long as the road is in use.

E. Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

Vegetation and wildlife productivity would be irretrievable.

IV. PERSONS, GROUPS, AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES CONSULTED

Larry Dalton, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Steve Rigby, Plateau Mining Company
Ben Grimes, Plateau Mining Company

V. INTENSITY OF PUBLIC INTEREST

The public has not been notified in regard to this proposal. Due to coal mining being the main economic stimulus to the community, it is doubtful there would be adverse public reaction.

VI. PARTICIPATING STAFF

Mark A. Mackiewicz, Soil Scientist
Paul J. Buff, Geologist

VII. SUMMARY

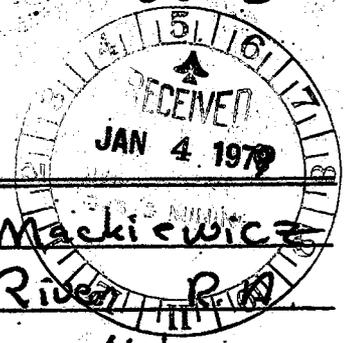
The environmental effects of this proposal have been analyzed. Though the proposal would have major unmitigable environmental impacts. An environmental statement is not recommended due to the scope of the proposal.

As a result of the proposed action, 5.46 acres of vegetation will be removed. Critical deer winter and summer range would be intruded.

No.
High-priority winter
and valuable summer

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

1791
6840



CONFIRMATION/REPORT OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

TO	Name	John Gill	FROM	Name	Mark Mackiewicz
	Office	Fish & Wildlife Service		Office	Price River
	Location	S&Z		Location	Price, Utah
	Telephone Number	524-5637		Telephone Number	637-4584

Purpose of Call:

To Find Out status on Plateau Mining Companies Road. On 10-27-78 I sent FWS Photos maps, Proposal and Description of Environment for the Access Road and Am waiting for their recommendation regarding the eagles. FWS said that they would be unable to work

Explanatory Remarks:

on consultation until the president has officially signed the extension of the Endangered Species Act. Until we get FWS's recommendation, we will be unable to proceed any further.

10-6-78
(Date)

Mark A. Mackiewicz
(Signature)