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State of Utah
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF OIL, GAS AND MINING

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October 31, 2000

To: [redacted]

Thru: Daron R. Haddock, Permit Supervisor

From: Wayne H. Western, Senior Reclamation Specialist
Paul B.Baker, Reclamation Biologist

Re: Technical Field Visit Corner Canyon Reclamation, Plateau Mining Corporation, Star Point Mine, [redacted]

Other Attendees:

Johnny Pappas, Vicky Miller, Johnny Greene and seven others from Plateau Mining Corporation.

Date & Time:

October 26, 2000 7:00 A.M. till 5:00 P.M.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the visit was to inspect the reclamation of Corner Canyon with emphasis on the fan portal. The Corner Canyon portals are in a remote location. The only access to the site is through the mine or by foot. On October 26, 2000, the permittee did the final backfilling and grading, along with portal closure and revegetation. Once the portal was sealed access to the site is limited.

OBSERVATIONS:

Backfilling and Grading

Most of the site had been backfilled and regraded before October 26, 2000. The backfill material and topsoil were brought to the site through the mine. The backfill and topsoil were spread by a D3 dozer.

The permittee placed as much backfill at the portal sites as possible. The belt and intake portals were completely backfilled and the portals sealed. The two sites were then topsoiled and the portals sealed.

The fan portal was a much larger disturbance. The permittee placed as much fill as possible along the cut slopes and highwalls. The permittee was not able completely to cover the cut slopes because of equipment and access limitations.

The only way to get equipment to the site was through the mine. The largest piece of equipment that could be brought to the site was a D3 dozer. The D3 could not push the material at an angle steep enough completely to eliminate the cut slopes.

The cut slopes are 3 feet to 4 feet high. Much of the highwalls are in bedrock that has a very high slope stability safety factor. See Figures 1 through 3.

The highwalls were eliminated. Figures 2 and 3 show the reclaimed fan highwall. The location of the portal is shown by the log sticking out of the ground in Figure 3. The permittee was able to reclaim the highwall by constructing a ramp to push the fill material above the portal.

The portals were backfilled by constructing a log fence above the portal. Fill was placed behind the log fence. The cables holding the log fence were released and the fill slide over the portal. At the fan portal the fill did not completely cover the portal. The permittee hand-shoveled fill to seal the portal completely. See Figure 4.

The portals will be sealed from inside the mine by backfilling the area 25 feet and placing a seal. The seal and backfill are needed to prevent air from entering the mine. After the portals were backfilled from the surface the sound of air flowing into the mine could still be heard.

The permittee does not want to apply for Phase I bond release at this time. They believe that the reduction in the reclamation bond premium is too small to justify time and money needed for bond release. Once the entire Star Point mine site has been backfilled and graded the permittee will apply for Phase I bond release.

Revegetation

The belt and intake portals had already been seeded before we arrived. Vicky Miller and Johnny Greene planted approximately 50 containerized transplants in these areas, and we then spread about one and a half bales of straw over the two portal areas as mulch. The operator had previously placed several downed aspen branches and logs on these portals. Lastly, Johnny Pappas spread a little extra seed.

On the fan portal area itself, we planted the balance of the 520 seedlings. The species were Douglas fir, elderberry, snowberry, and aspen. Most of the aspen were planted on the downstream end of the pad away from the portal while most of the Douglas fir trees were planted close to the portal. The shrubs were scattered through the whole area. We did not clump the shrubs or trees because shrubs and trees were not clumped in adjacent undisturbed areas.

After transplanting was done in an area, Johnny Pappas seeded it, then the entire area was mulched with certified noxious weed free straw.

The revegetation potential in this area is high, but the soil right above the portal was, compared with the rest of the site, loose, soft, and smooth. This is the area most likely to have revegetation and erosion control problems. At the base of this slope is a relatively flat area that should have better vegetation and be able to catch sediment coming off the slope.

The operator does not plan to visit the site until next summer. They invited the Division along to help determine addition work would be needed. The Division should take advantage of opportunities to visit the site, particularly in the next two years, to ensure vegetation is becoming established and that erosion and sedimentation are being minimized.

RECOMMENDATIONS/CONCLUSIONS:

The Division and the permittee should monitor the site for the next few years to determine if the site is stable. Since the permittee is not going to request Phase I bond release at this time the Division should not make a finding about the site meeting Phase I bond standards at this time. The Division should make the finding later so that the Division can look for problems with soil settling or slumping.

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cc: Johnny Pappas, Plateau Mining Corp.
Bill Malencik, DOGM
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(PHOTOGRAPHS)

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4