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State of Utah

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF OIL, GAS AND MINING

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OC

October 16, 2002

TO: Internal File

TRHU: Daron R. Haddock, Permit Supervisor

FROM: Wayne H. Western, Sr. Reclamation Specialist/Engineering *WHW*
Dave W. Darby, Sr. Reclamation Specialist/Hydrology *DWD*
Susan M. White, Sr. Reclamation Specialist/Biology *SMW*

RE: Technical Field Visit, Gentry Mountain Lease Relinquishment Review, Plateau Mining Corporation, Star Point Mine, C/007/006

Other Attendees:

Johnny Pappas, Plateau Mining Corp.
Tom Lloyd, USFS
Bryan McClelland, USFS
John Healy, USFS

Date & Time: October 1, 2002, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the visit was to view and evaluate surface effects of mining on federal leases acquired by Plateau Mining Corporation (Plateau). Plateau wants to relinquish the leases. The Lease Contract specifies that a surface inspection needs to be completed before the operator can apply for lease relinquishment.

TECHNICAL FIELD VISIT

OBSERVATIONS:

On October 1, 2002, the personnel mentioned above met to conduct a field review of the federal coal leases held by Plateau Mining Corporation. The field review is required by federal coal leasing rules prior to granting lease relinquishment. We drove up the left fork of Cedar Creek to the upper areas of Gentry Mountain. The U.S. Forest Service (Forest Service) is the land management agency. The Division of Oil Gas and Mining (Division) deferred to the Forest Service the lead in identifying area of concern that needed to be evaluated, however the Division reserved the right to address issues specific to Utah's coal mining rules and regulations. The Forest Service identified subsidence, airshaft, spring flow, wells, and a watering pond as sites that needed to be evaluated. The Division pointed out the regulation for appropriated water resource replacement, which required water replacement of damaged, contaminated or diminished appropriated water sources after October 24, 1992.

We first hiked two miles out on Gentry Ridge to three drill holes. One drill hole is a monitoring well, Well 86-26-6. Plateau plans to reclaim these drill holes by filling them with cement from bottom to a couple feet from the top. The manhole covers and cement foundation will be removed. Plateau was concerned about the amount of reclamation needed on the access road. It is currently designated as non-use. The Forest Service has built a timber fence along part of the road. A drill rig would have to be brought to the site to fill the wells from bottom to top. There were discussion of Plateau using a helicopter to access the wells; however, Johnny thought accessing the sites down to the wells by the road would be easier and cheaper. The Forest Service will have to decide how much of the road Plateau will have to reclaim and weather it should be ripped or gouged, then revegetated.

On the way back from the wells we hiked down to Spring 452. Some of the cattlemen had recently built a log fence around the spring and installed a trough about one hundred feet down the slope. Johnny had monitored the spring.

We drove north to a site where Plateau installed an emergency airshaft for the mine in the early 1990's. The structure consists of a 6-inch drill hole from about 4 ft below the ground surface down to the coal seam. A metal box sits above the shaft. It measures approximately 4 feet by 8 feet by 12 feet. The top of the box is at ground level. Two manhole access covers sit atop the box. The method of reclamation was discussed between the Forest Service and Plateau. The shaft will have to be filled with cement and concrete and that requires a drill rig. It was decided that the access box would be removed and the site back filled. A borrow area may be needed to supply the fill, and then the site revegetated. This site is permitted with the Division as a disturbed area and is subject to the 10-year liability period and meeting all bond release requirements.

We again drove north to Castle Valley Ridge overlooking Nuck Woodward Canyon. Plateau's surveyor reported seeing some subsidence cracks on the ridge. The tension cracks appear to be relatively recent; the last mining was conducted in the area in 1998. This was one of the last areas mined by Plateau. Pictures were taken of the cracks. The cracks could present some danger to cattle, wildlife or humans should they stumble into one. Cattle have been moved off the range for the winter, but will be back next summer. We discussed measures Plateau needed to do to mitigate the fractures. The Forest Service promoted the idea of using natural materials to fill the fracture, rejecting the use of foam mixtures or foam pillows to fill the cracks. Johnny stated that mitigation could not be accomplished this year. Since hunters will be in the mountains as early as next week the Forest Service required Plateau to place signs indicating "Unstable Ground" near the cracks. Then fencing will be required around the cracks until filling can be completed.

The Forest Service is still considering input from the Huntington Cattlemen Association, represented by Mr. Lee McElprang, concerning Star Point spring, water-monitoring site 971. They claim Star Point Spring has dried up, because of mining. The Forest Service and Division evaluated the issue in September 1998; see Field Visit Report September 9, 1998. A resolution was reached, where by Plateau was to work with the cattlemen to try to redevelop the spring. We tried to get to the spring, but rain and snowy weather made the roads slick. We drove to a stock watering pond where had to turn around. The pond is approximately 0.5 mile from the spring. A map shows the area could have subsided after it was mined in the 1980's, long before the water replacement rules were enacted. The Division is required to ensure the hydrologic balance is maintained; however, there is no data to show the flows at the spring site. The Forest Service wants Plateau to do some development work on the spring or another one in the vicinity.

RECOMMENDATIONS/CONCLUSIONS:

Prior to submitting a request for lease relinquishment the operator will seal the airshaft and all wells. The right of entry for the airshaft will need to be covered under a surface use agreement until the Division releases final bond. The operator will also be required to establish warning signs at the subsidence fractures before hunting season, and fence the area this fall. The Forest Service requires sealing the cracks with natural material (rocks, branches and soils).

The Division has made a finding on the spring issue, September 29, 1998. Regulations require mining companies to replace appropriated water sources after October 24, 1992. Since mining took place in the area in the early 1980's and water data does not exist to show water loses after that date, the Operator is not responsible for rehabilitating the water source. And, since the flow has never been established there is no evidence to support that the hydrologic balance has been disrupted.