TECHNICAL FIELD VISIT

Utah Coal Regulatory Program

July 27, 2004

TO: Internal File

THRU: Pamela Grubaugh-Littig, Permit Supervisor

FROM: Wayne H. Western, Environmental Scientist III/Engineering

RE: Technical Field Visit, Phase I Bond Release Corner Canyon, Plateau Mining Corporation, Star Point Mine, C/007/006, Task ID #1910

Attendees:

Mitch Rollings, OSM
Johnny Pappas, Plateau Mining Corporation
Layne Jensen, Earth Fax Engineering
Mike Smith, USFS
Wayne Western, DOGM

Date & Time:

On June 23, 2004, the inspection team left the meeting site, intersection of Highway 10 and Highway 122, at 9:15 AM and proceeded to the overview for Corner Canyon. Mike Smith declined to go on the hike. The inspection team arrived at the trailhead at 10:30 AM and hiked to the site. They arrived at 11:15 AM, stayed until noon and returned to trailhead at 1:30 PM.

PURPOSE:

The inspection team conducted the site visit to determine if Corner Canyon met the minimum requirements for Phase I bond release. The minimum requirements were that backfilling and grading, which included topsoil/growth medium placement and drainage controls were completed.

OBSERVATIONS:

The Corner Canyon Facilities were located on 0.44 acres in the South Fork of Corner Canyon. The facilities consisted of a fan and five portals.

When the inspection team arrived on site, they determined the Plateau Mining Corporation (PMC) removed all the facilities and equipment from the site. PMC seeded the site in 2000 and the established vegetation appeared adequate to control erosion. The inspection team found no evidence of any activities other than reclamation occurred on site since 2000.

The facilities consisted of a fan and five portals. The fan and the two exhaust portals were located on the southern part of the site. The three intake portals were on the northern side. The exhaust portals and fan facility were discussed as one unit and the three intake portals were discussed as a separate unit.

Exhaust Portals and Fan Facility

The main items that the inspection team evaluated at the site were how well the highwalls and cutslope were reclaimed, the stability of the backfill material, and hydrologic controls.

Highwall Remnants

Corner Canyon was a pre-SMCRA site. PMC was unable to eliminate the highwalls because of the following restriction:

- The size and type of equipment that PMC could bring through the mine was limited.
- The amount of material available for reclamation was limited because the site was pre-SMCRA.
- PMC had to take the equipment underground before they finished reclamation.

The inspection team evaluated the safety of the highwall remnants as follows:

- Did the highwall remnants pose a safety hazard to the public? The highwall remnants were in competent sandstone. There was no evidence that slope failure occurred in the highwall remnants or in the natural rock outcrops. The highwall remnants were stable and did not pose a public safety risk.
- Did the highwall remnants pose an environmental hazard? The main environmental concerns involved runoff. Either the runoff coming off the highwall remnants would cause erosion or that runoff would go into the fill and cause stability problems. The inspection team found no signs of runoff going into the fill or of erosion.
- Were the highwall remnants compatible with the postmining land use? The postmining land use was wildlife habitat and grazing. The highwall remnants did not interfere with those land uses. The highwall remnants were similar to nature cliffs in the area.

Cutslopes

The cutslopes were pre-SMCRA. As stated in the highwall remnant section the amount of reclamation the PMC could be was limited. As with the highwall remnants the inspection party found that the cutslope remnants were not hazards to the public or the environment.

Backfill and Grading:

The backfill appeared to be stable. The inspection team found no signs of slumps or slides.

The inspection team found that the topsoil was stable and able to support vegetation.

Hydrology:

The only hydraulic control methods at the site were surface roughening and vegetation. The inspection team found no signs of erosion so those methods have been effective.

Intake Portals

The amount of disturbed area for each of the three portals was about 20 feet square. The only indications that the areas were disturbed were the change in slope at the undisturbed edges and lack of mature vegetation. There were no highwall remnants or cutslopes in the northern part of the site.

Backfill and Grading

The backfill appeared to be stable. The inspection found no signs of mass movement or instability.

The inspection team found that the topsoil was stable and able to support vegetation.

Hydrology

The only hydraulic control methods at the site were surface roughening and vegetation. The inspection team found no signs of erosion so those methods have been effective.

RECOMMENDATIONS/CONCLUSIONS:

The Division's recommendation was to grant Phase I bond for the Corner Canyon Facilities. The Division found that the designs, including the retention of highwall remnants and cutslopes, met the requirements for backfilling and grading, including restoring the site to the approximant original contours in a technical analysis date July 22, 2002. In the field inspection of June 23, 2004, the Division confirmed that PMC had properly backfilled and graded the site and that the hydrologic controls were adequate.

cc: All Attendees
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