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STUDY TO DETERMINE THE EFFECTS OF COAL DEVELOPMENT ON WILDLIFE IN SOUTHEASTERN UTAH

MONTHLY REPORT FOR FEBRUARY, 1980

During February 1980, deer migration patterns along the proposed conveyor belt were monitored. Big game tracks were also monitored along the experimental and control transects, except for the canyon transects, which were snowed out and had potential avalanche conditions.

Breeding raptor surveys were also conducted within one kilometer of the preparation plant and portal areas. There is evidence of use by owls in this area. Hopefully, additional work in March will identify breeding territories and possibly aerie sites. To date, one pair of mature golden eagles use the mine plan area as part of their breeding territory. It is expected that their aerie site will be located during March or April.

During monitoring periods, the conveyor belt corridor is monitored from Sage Point to Fish Creek Ridge one day, then from Dugout Canyon road to Fish Creek Ridge the next day. To date, conveyor Section 8 has experienced the greatest passage of deer followed in successive order by Sections 7, 5, 6, 3, and 4 (Table I).

Conveyor Section 9 is considered as a separate conveyor; and to date, has more activity than Section 8 (Table I).

It is recommended that crossing structu r be of two types: 1. "Underpasses" having maintained across a span of at least 5 mete having a slope no greater than 3:1 and 5 met to the conveyor and tapering out to 5:1 at points 180 degrees to the conveyor.

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It is recommended that crossing structures for big game along the conveyor be of two types: 1. "Underpasses" having a minimum height of 3 meters maintained across a span of at least 5 meters; 2. "Overpasses" or ramps having a slope no greater than 3:1 and 5 meters wide at an angle 90 degrees to the conveyor and tapering out to 5:1 at points 180 degrees to the conveyor.

The slope should be of natural soil, vegetated and would not require guide fences. The platform over the conveyor should be concrete or any other material that would not echo when being crossed by deer and should be of character similar to rock or natural earth.

To date, recommendations for minimum numbers of crossing structures on the conveyor belt are as follows: In Section 8, proceeding east to west, the first three hundred meter length needs five crossing structures. The next four hundred meter length needs one crossing in each 100 meter length. The last three hundred meter length needs six crossing structures. A mixture of overpasses and underpasses should be used.

Conveyor Section 7, proceeding east to west, needs one crossing in each of the 100 meter lengths, except that three structures will be needed in the last 100 meter length of conveyor Section 7.

Conveyor Section 6, proceeding east to west, needs complete utilization of the top of Fish Creek Ridge for crossings and one crossing at the base of the Ridge on the west side.

Conveyor Section 5, proceeding east to west, needs one crossing structure in each 100 meter length of conveyor.

Conveyor Section 4, proceeding east to west, needs one crossing in each of the 100 meter lengths.

Conveyor Section 3, proceeding east to west, needs only two crossings in the last 300 meter length of the conveyor section.

Conveyor Section 9, proceeding in a north to south direction, needs two crossings in every 100 meter length of conveyor or the conveyor needs to be sufficiently elevated along its entire length to allow passage of deer.

Conveyor Section 11, proceeding in a south to north direction, needs one crossing in every 100 meter length of conveyor.

A mixture of "overpasses" and "underpasses" should be planned for use along every conveyor section. The above data relative to placement of crossing structures is preliminary in nature, but may be useful for current design work by the conveyor enginner.

To date, three bald eagles have been observed utilizing the mine plan area on an irregular basis. This use does not represent a winter concentration, and there does not seem to be any roost trees on the mine plan area for these birds. The monthly report for March will finalize observations on the wintering activities of the bald eagle for Phase I of this project.

Next month's activities will include raptor surveys, Emlen transects, big game track transects, and the continued monitoring of the proposed conveyor belt for deer migration patterns.

TABLE 1. INDEX OF MULE DEER ACTIVITY IN RELATION TO THE PROPOSED COAL CONVEYOR AT THE SAGE POINT-DUGOUT CANYON MINING PROJECT, CARBON COUNTY, UTAH

Months		Conveyor Sections							
		Crucial-Critical Range				High-Priority Range			
		6	7	8	9	3	4	5	11
		Indices to Deer Use							
December 1979	Passage Index[1]	2	2	22	--	4	1	9	13
	%[2]	5%	5%	55%	NA[4]	10%	2%	23%	NA[4]
	Trials[3]	0	0	6	--	0	0	0	2
January	Passage Index[1]	20	113	372	372	23	11	69	33
	%[2]	3%	19%	61%	NA[4]	4%	2%	11%	NA[4]
	Trials[3]	6	22	32	56	5	4	15	15
February 1980	Passage Index[1]	18	16	48	138	3	16	20	19
	%[2]	15%	13%	40%	NA[4]	2%	13%	17%	NA[4]
	Trials[3]	18	4	9	21	7	11	5	6
Total	Passage Index[1]	40	131	442	510	30	28	98	65
	%[2]	5%	17%	57%	NA[4]	4%	4%	13%	NA[4]
	Trials[3]	18	22	32	56	5	11	15	15

1. Number of individuals identifiable tracks crossing the conveyor corridor.
2. Number of tracks per section ÷ total summation of tracks from Sections 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.
3. Number of trials formed by a multitude of tracks in addition to infividual, identifiable tracks. Trails in the total column equal the greatest number observed during any one month.
4. Not applicable.