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DIVISION OF OIL, GAS AND MINING

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TO: File

THROUGH: Daron Haddock, Permit Supervisor

FROM: Paul Baker, Reclamation Biologist 

DATE: October 4, 1993

RE: Alternate Topsoil Borrow Sites, U. S. Fuel Co., Hiawatha Mines, Folder #2, ACT/007/011, Carbon County, Utah

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

U. S. Fuel has proposed adding two soil borrow sites from which to obtain soil to cover the refuse piles. The soils at these sites appear to be very similar to the soils at the approved borrow sites; however, a judgment of the suitability of these materials for use as substitute topsoil is left for a soil scientist.

The revegetation plan was reviewed in the permit renewal reviews in 1992 and early 1993, and no modification of this plan is needed. The proposed borrow locations are in sagebrush vegetation types which are described in the plan. They are in or near critical deer winter range, but the plan does not call for performing reclamation work during the crucial winter months. It is important that these areas not be disturbed between December 1 and April 15.

Canyon sweetvetch, a category C2 plant for listing as threatened or endangered, is present in the Hiawatha area, but the borrow sites probably do not contain suitable habitat for this species. No plants of this species were found by Division personnel in a search of borrow site E on September 22, 1993.

The reviewer has two concerns with the plan and makes the following recommendations. First, the plan calls for using native straw or hay as an organic amendment to the soil. U. S. Fuel is strongly encouraged to use certified noxious weed free straw or hay. Noxious weeds have been introduced to many sites through straw or hay, and they create serious problems.

Second, the soil to be used is of alluvial origin and was deposited on relatively gentle slopes. Thus, it appears to be finer than soils which naturally occur on slopes in the area. The soil would be applied to slopes of up to about 30%. This may create erosion problems. Some of the soils that U. S. Fuel proposes to use contain some



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rocks and gravel, and these should be used on the slopes if possible. If soils with rocks and gravel are not available to place on the slopes, it is recommended that rocks be placed there to serve as a mulch. Larger rocks, if available, could be used in piles to create wildlife habitat.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If U. S. Fuel follows their approved plan, wildlife will be adequately protected as soil is harvested from the borrow sites. Canyon sweetvetch probably does not occur on the borrow sites. It is recommended that certified noxious weed free hay or straw be used for mulch or where an organic amendment is used. It is also recommended that soils with higher rock contents be used on the slopes of the refuse piles or that rock be added to the surfaces of the slopes to reduce the erosion potential.