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State of Utah
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DIVISION OF OIL, GAS AND MINING

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May 9, 1995

TO: Daron Haddock, Permit Supervisor

FROM: Paul Baker, Steve Johnson, Wayne Western WHW Folder #2 and Permit Binder

RE: Midterm and Permit Renewal Responses, Hiawatha Complex, U. S. Fuel Company, ACT/007/011, Working File, Carbon County, Utah

SYNOPSIS

U. S. Fuel has proposed changes to its Mining and Reclamation Plan which would allow the roads in South, Middle, and North Forks to be left after mining in an unimproved condition. This was done in response to Division comments about the roads.

Additionally, U. S. Fuel is adding forestry to its list of postmining land uses. The amendment application says forestry was a premining land use, so no land use change is proposed.

POSTMINING LAND USES

Regulatory Reference: UCA R645-301-412

Analysis:

U. S. Fuel is proposing to leave the roads in the South, Middle, and North Forks of Miller Creek as part of the postmining land use. Pavement would be removed and the roads would be returned to an unimproved condition. The roads would be ripped and seeded and drainage control (water bars) installed.

The Permittee has adequately demonstrated that these roads are needed for the postmining land uses of recreation, grazing, and wildlife. They have also shown how wildlife will be adequately protected during crucial times in the winter when they are most susceptible to harmful stress.

In addition to these land uses, U. S. Fuel has added forestry as a postmining land use. The plan indicates forestry was a premining land use, so this proposal does not constitute a land use change to an alternative postmining land use. The roads would be needed for this land use.

The Division will probably not be able to verify that forestry was a land use prior to any mining. However, it is reasonable to suspect that the area was previously logged. For this reason, the Division should not consider logging as an alternative postmining land use.

The Permittee needs to be very careful about where logging operations are allowed. Disturbed areas will not be ready for logging before the extended responsibility period for revegetation success expires. Vegetation and soils could be damaged if logging operations are staged on the mine pads. These areas and the roads will be subject to all performance standards. Roads that remain for the postmining land use do not need to meet revegetation success standards.

Findings:

U. S. Fuel has met the requirements of R645-301-412 for leaving the roads in the South, Middle, and North Forks of Miller Creek in an unimproved condition following mining. Forestry has been added as a postmining land use, but this is not an alternative postmining land use. So vegetation and soils are not adversely affected, U. S. Fuel needs to be very careful about how logging operations are conducted. All activities in the disturbed area will need to conform with the performance standards.

RECOMMENDATION

U. S. Fuel has complied with the postmining land use requirements. This amendment should be approved.

HYDROLOGIC INFORMATION

Road Drainage

Regulatory Reference: R645-301-760

Analysis:

Appendix VII-15 is the reclamation hydrology plan for the roads in Middle Fork and South Fork canyons. The plan is to reclaim the road back to gravel roads. U.S. Fuel will commit to removing the asphalt surface and leave the gravel. Most road drainage culverts will be removed; however, a few culverts will be left because they are necessary to maintain usefulness of the roads. The retained culverts are designed to safely pass the 100-year, 6-hour storm event runoff. To maintain a useful road drainage system after the culverts have been

removed, U.S. Fuel will construct a series of water bars across the road. These water bars are shown in their approximate location in Exhibits V-19 and V-20. The bars will be placed no more than 1000 feet apart and are designed to convey the runoff from the 100-year, 6-hour event. Designs for the water bars and retained culverts are included in the back of Appendix VII-15.

Findings:

The reclamation road drainage for South Fork and Middle Fork canyons is adequately designed. The few culverts that will be maintained are necessary for the road to be accessible. Maintenance on the remaining culverts will be the responsibility of the permittee until the time of final bond release. At that time the land owner will take over the responsibility. The water bars will provide proper drainage after the other culverts are removed. Water bars are currently designed to be a maximum of 1000 feet apart. This should be adequate to control runoff but if it prove to be inadequate, U.S. Fuel would be required to modify or add additional drainage structures.

RECOMMENDATION

This road reclamation plan can be approved as submitted. U.S. Fuel should be aware that they are responsible for maintaining all road drainage structures during the reclamation phases. This include maintaining the retained culverts and the water bars.

ROAD SYSTEMS

Regulatory Reference: 30 CFR Sec. 701.5, 784.24, 817.150, 817.151, 512.250 817.151

Analysis:

The Operator requested that the South Fork, Middle Fork and North Fork roads be retained in an unimproved condition. Since the roads are paved reclamation activities will include removing and disposing of the pavement, ripping the underlying material and revegetating. Existing drainage structures will be replaced with water bars. The full width of the existing roads will be left as is.

The area will not be restored to the original contour because the roads and embankments consist of settled and revegetated fill. According to R645-301-537.200 regrading of settled and revegetated fill will not be required for underground coal mines

- settled and revegetated fills will be composed of spoil or nonacid- or nontoxic-forming underground development waste
- the spoil will not be located so as to be detrimental to the environment, to health and safety of the public, or to the approved postmining land use
- stability of the spoil will be demonstrated through standard geotechnical analysis . . .
- if it is determined by the Division that disturbance of the existing spoil or underground development waste would increase environmental harm or adversely affect the health and safety of the public . . .

The Division determined that removing the settled and revegetated road embankments would increase the environmental risks. The natural slopes in the area are approximately 1:1.7. Usually slopes that are steeper than 1:2.5 are difficult to reclaim. Reclamation difficulties include topsoil erosion and establishing vegetation and slope stability.

Findings:

The Division determined that the road embankments constitute settled and revegetated fill and that the Operator is not required to reclaim the road to the approximate original contours.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the Operator's request to retain the South Fork, North Fork and Middle Fork roads.

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