

REGION V ON-SITE INSPECTION REPORT

U.S. STEEL CORPORATION
 WELLINGTON PREPARATION PLANT
 Wellington, Utah 84542

DATE: September 18, 1979
TIME: 2 p.m.
WEATHER: Warm and clear
COUNTY & STATE: Carbon County, Utah
STATE FILE NO: ACT-007-012
COMPANY OFFICIALS: Glenn Sides and Bill Kirkwood
STATE OFFICIALS: Tom Suchoski, Joe Helfrich, and Doug Stewart
OSM OFFICIAL: Gary Fritz

GENERAL COMMENTS

This is U.S. Steel's coal processing plant for their western operations. Coal is brought in by rail to the facility where it is washed and graded for shipment to their steel mills. The treatment plant, refuse piles, and slurry impoundment area are located along both sides of the Price River south of the city of Wellington in T15S, R11E.

Refuse from the cleaning operation is hauled by truck to an area south of the Price River next to the plant. Coal slurry is pumped via pipe 4,000 feet north of the river to a series of impoundments at a rate of 100 gallons per minute.

COMPLIANCE WITH INTERIM REGULATIONS717.11 General Obligations

The Utah Division of Oil, Gas, & Mining's MR Form #2 was available for review at the coal preparation plant. A permit has been granted by the Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining to operate the facility.

717.12 Signs and Markers

The mine and permit identification signs were posted at all points of access from the public roads. Signs were also posted at the access to the treatment plant refuse impoundment area across the Price River.

717.14 & 717.15 Backfilling and Grading and Disposal of Excess Materials

The State has turned down the company's proposal to cover the refuse piles and slurry impoundments with topsoil from another area so they have to use soil from within the permit area. There was no evidence of an effort on the company's behalf to begin saving topsoil, in the area, for resoiling the disposal sites. This was a violation of PL 95-87; however, the refuse pile has not been extended for some time. Insufficient evidence is available to prove that the company has buried topsoil since May 3, 1978. I told the company that new expansion of

either the slurry site or solid refuse dump would necessitate the removal of topsoil for redistribution at a later date. I also suggested that the company should put stakes on the edge of the topsoil removal operation so their truck operators or slurry would not cover topsoil that was not removed. Evidence of the present perimeter of the refuse and slurry areas has been gathered so any new encroachment on undisturbed area before topsoil is removed will be an automatic violation for failure to remove topsoil or a substitute soil medium for redistribution. I have requested an aerial survey of the area to substantiate my on-the-ground evidence. An additional search is being conducted at this time to document loss of topsoil during the interim regulation period. If sufficient evidence is available, a violation will be issued.

717.17 Protection of the Hydrologic System

The Price River is monitored above and below the site once a month. The slurry ponds are inspected daily by the operator.

Groundwater is not monitored. The State has concluded that groundwater monitoring is unnecessary for this area. The company submitted a written statement that there is no water table in the Mancos Shale on which the plant is built. I disagree! During the inspection, Bill Kirkwood pointed out several things that lead me to believe otherwise: 1. Steel or iron pipes that are buried in the area have to be buried in a gravel bed. 2. If the gravel was not used, electrolysis breaks down the metal structures to the point where the pipe leaks. 3. Rocks are pushed by natural forces through the metal so they have to be replaced every two years.

We also looked at an area east of the preparation plant/railroad tracks and the river. A series of two ponds that are a safety overflow for the plant are located in a marshy and heavily vegetated area between the plant and river. No direct flow was noted between the ponds and the river so the company was not cited for failure to have a point discharge permit. However, the pond level does not seem to fluctuate. There are no high or low water marks and the area is marshy. There is ground-water in the immediate area - it should be monitored.

I spoke with several people in OSM's technical services division about a ground water monitoring system in this or similar areas. John Hardaway, Chief, Division of Technical Analysis and Research, suggested that the company could put in a number of monitoring wells by digging holes with a backhoe and burying a pipe in the hole. These wells should be installed above and below the areas affected.

The area is relatively flat, so the State has decided there is no need for any sediment control facilities. The runoff from the swales above the permit area is diverted around the site by a diversion ditch. The company claims that the diversion is complete; however, I think that we need to review the drainage a little closer on the next inspection. I did not have time to walk through this area during my inspection.

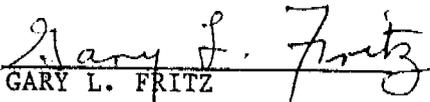
717.20 Topsoil Handling and Revegetation

Topsoil or a suitable resoiling medium must be removed for later re-distribution. There was no evidence of any substantial encroachment on topsoil so no violation was issued for the company's failure to save topsoil.

CONCLUSIONS

Neither the State nor OSM could ask the company to get a discharge permit for the non-point discharge of the two small emergency overflow ponds in the marsh below the preparation plant. However, the non-point discharge area is subject to flood due to the close proximity of the Price River. I contacted the Corps of Engineers about their jurisdiction in this area. Their Salt Lake City office promised to look into the possibility of encroachment on a 404 permit area. They have notified me that the area is in violation and steps are being taken to correct the problem.

The company does not have any outstanding violations from the Division of Oil, Gas, & Mining.


GARY L. FRITZ
RECLAMATION SPECIALIST