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Format story  
for printingE-mail a copy  
of this story**Mining group backs SUWA's appeal**

Union's support isn't related to the environment

**By Patty Henetz**

Associated Press writer

The Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance has a new ally: the United Mine Workers of America, which supports the environmental organization's efforts to appeal a coal mine permit.

"While I do not know for what particular reason the SUWA group is appealing, I do know we support any group's right to defend its members or constituents," said UMWA International Secretary-Treasurer Carlo Tarley in a news release.

The ad-hoc partnership is the first time the UMWA has thrown its support to an environmental group in this way, said UMWA spokesman Doug Gibson.

"Our attachment to this cause is not based on their issue," Gibson said. "It's their right to appeal this thing. The common denominator is Bob Murray."

In other words: The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

Robert Murray owns Utah American Energy Inc. SUWA doesn't want him to be allowed to dig a coal mine near Lila Canyon in the Book Cliffs, a remote redrock desert region that is part of the group's 9-million-acre wilderness proposal. The UMWA is embroiled in labor disputes with Murray in Pennsylvania and Ohio, where the union says its members may be entitled to more pay.

"People who would appear to be on different sides of the fence agree that the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining needs to scrutinize this permit. That's a real breakthrough in Utah environmental politics," said SUWA attorney Herb McHarg. "You're exchanging a cost to the environment for these (mining) jobs. If workers aren't going to be given the benefits they were promised, it's at a huge environmental cost."

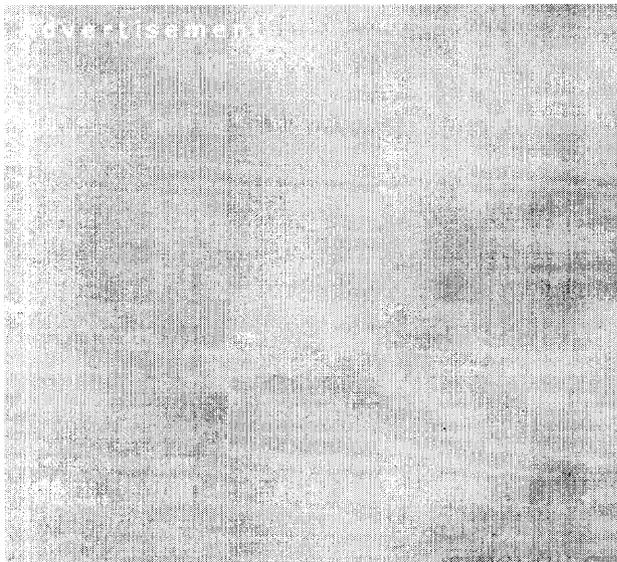
SUWA on Tuesday petitioned for a hearing before the Utah Board of Oil, Gas and Mining. The environmental group wants the state to

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rescind its permit for the mine, which would be near East Carbon and Wellington.

The division has issued a permit to Utah American to develop the mine, said Matt Mackiewicz from the Price office of the federal Bureau of Land Management. The federal Office of Surface Mining still has to approve the mine plan. The BLM has approved a right of way for the mine's road, but that, too, is pending.

The environmental assessment determined that 315 coal-haul trucks would travel the 4.7-mile road and through Wellington — a Carbon County town of 1,666 — each day, said Mackiewicz.



SUWA says the mining company and the state failed to assess the mine's full environmental effects.

"There is no adequate baseline data on how the mine will impact water quality and quantity," said McHarg. The mine workers, he said, "are concerned about water-quality issues and how mines can affect workers, because workers typically live in the area."

Oil, Gas and Mining spokesman Jim Springer said the Lila Canyon assessment was accurate. "We would certainly stand behind that work," he said.

Lila Canyon, off Highway 6 between Price and Green River, has seeps and springs that ensure a year-round supply of water for bighorn sheep, elk and deer.

The Book Cliffs is part of SUWA's Desolation Canyon proposed wilderness area and is the largest block of unprotected, roadless area in the lower 48 states.

SUWA filed its initial appeal with the BLM last year. They also have an appeal pending with the Interior Department's Board of Land Appeals over the BLM's authorization of the permit.

The Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining, which last month approved the mine plan, has scheduled a Sept. 26 hearing on the SUWA appeal.

