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August 14, 2002

Mary Ann Wright
Associate Director of Mining
Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining
1594 W. North Temple, Suite 1210
P.O. Box 145801
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-5801;

*Meaning
C/007/013*

**RE: New Permit Application, Lila Canyon Extension, UtahAmerican Energy, Inc.
Horse Canyon Mine C/007/013-PM02B**

Dear Ms. Wright:

I am writing concerning UtahAmerican Energy's application to mine coal in Lila Canyon. I am very concerned by the potential impacts of coal mining in this area, which contains numerous seeps and springs that sustain critical year-round wildlife habitat, including habitat for bighorn sheep.

I applaud and personally appreciate the decision of the Board of Oil, Gas and Mining to overturn the permit issued by the Division to mine coal in this area. Of the multitude of impacts this permit would have allowed, I am most concerned by the impacts to wilderness resources. In particular, this mine would have underlain large portions of the proposed Lila Canyon wilderness unit and the Turtle Canyon Wilderness Study Area, with the effect of eradicating many important seeps and springs. I agree with the finding of the Board that the Division's decision failed to address important geologic, hydrologic and biological factors.

I am disappointed that the response of UtahAmerican Energy has simple been to submit another application without providing the analysis that was erroneously absent from the first application. It causes me to fear that UtahAmerican Energy is seeking to arrange a means by which it can bypass the laws relating to coal mining, rather than being forced to comply with them. I also question the respect of UtahAmerican Energy for the Board, and believe that UtahAmerican Energy views the Board as an obstacle to work around by adding meaningless verbiage to its permit application, rather than as an entity empowered by the people to protect public resources, deserving of respect for its orders.

I thank the Board for its measured discretion in not granting special favors to UtahAmerican Energy, and urge that the same scrutiny continue in the future. In addition, I urge the Board to not waste its time considering future application submittals until the company has collected adequate biological and hydrological information. I also ask the Board to consider rejecting this mining application on its merits, in deference to the spectacular resources that will be lost if a permit is ever granted.

Thank you for your concern on this important issue.

Sincerely,


Jim Steitz

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