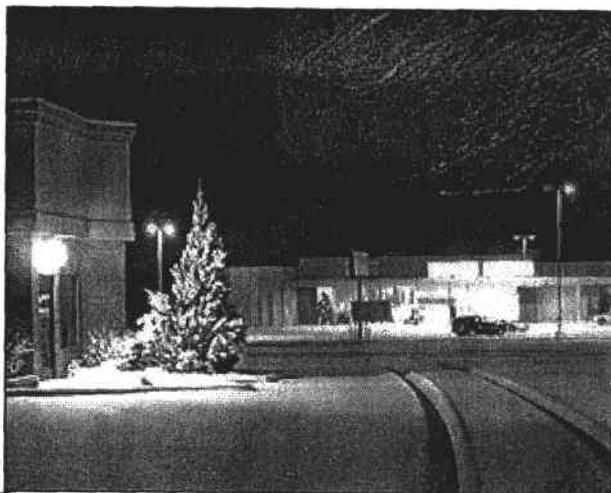


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Weekend storm blankets Price



Weekend storm blankets Price, Carbon County area with snow.

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Company lays off 114 miners

By CHARLES MCMANUS
Sun Advocate reporter

On Dec. 15, UtahAmerican Energy Inc. announced that the company had temporarily reduced its workforce by 114 employees effective Dec. 14.

According to the company's press release, the layoff comes as a result of increasing levels of methane gas at UtahAmerican's Tower Mine.

"We regret the temporary reduction in employment," stated Bruce Hill, director and chief executive officer of Utah American. "But it is unavoidable as we accomplish remediation work to address the methane buildup just encountered. We have started drilling additional degasification holes vertically from the surface as well as horizontally from the coal seam."

"We are also boring a 16-foot air shaft and installing a 1500 horsepower blowing fan on the shaft for additional ventilation and methane control. In addition, the entire power distribution system is being upgraded to accommodate the increased electrical demand associated with the ventilation changes. The work is projected to be finished by March 31, 2007 and we are hopeful full production can resume by April 2007," continued Hill.

In interviews conducted in October with Bob Murray, the president and chief executive officer of Murray Energy Corporation indicated that UtahAmerican was reviewing the operation at Tower to assess the methane problem, but had no plans for halting coal production at the mine at that time. Murray Energy is UtahAmerican's parent company.

In an interview on Dec. 18, Murray reported that the 114 laid off miners included workers at the company's at Tower, West Ridge and Crandall Canyon mines.

"We would not have had to lay these people off if we could have gotten our permits from the Department of Oil, Gas and Mining for the Lila Canyon," pointed out Murray. "We have told them that we want to see permitting by the middle of January. If we don't get a response, are going to seek litigation."

The company press release stated that, "while any reduction in manpower is always

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unfortunate, we particularly regret the timing of this layoff being near the holidays. The layoff was caused by the sudden increase in methane levels and our deep concern for the safety of our employees takes priority over any other consideration."

That regret is felt by the laid off miners as well.

"I knew something was coming," said Jarred Jaramillo, who worked on the longwall at the West Ridge mine. "Why are we cleaning out our lockers and taking the scan cards out of our helmets if we are going to be back in a couple of months?"

UtahAmerican purchased the Tower mine last August as part of the company's acquisition of all the operations of Andalex Resources. The Tower division has been operating in the Book Cliffs coal reserve since 1980.

Overtime, the methane emissions have grown into a problem for the mine. Methane is a naturally occurring gas liberated from the coal seam during mining. Company officials indicated the build up has become hazardous and must be remedied for the mine to return to full production.

Conventional room and pillar techniques with continuous miners were used at the Carbon County operation until 1994, when a longwall system was installed. The room and pillar techniques continued until 2001, when the operation changed to continuous miners with mobile roof support technology.

The longwall mining system was reinstalled in 2004 and according to company officials it has never performed to the systems potential due to methane gas emissions.

Delynn Fielding, economic development director for Carbon County, addressed the impact of the layoff Monday.

While the situation is devastating to affected employees, Fielding indicated that a layoff of the size in question for a four-month period will not be devastating to the county's economy.

"Right now, the economy is very strong. And depending on the skill sets of the miners affected, they will make the decisions to stay or leave on an individual basis," pointed out Fielding.

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Carbon commissioners reaffirm plans to construct county courthouse facility

By LES BOWEN
Sun Advocate reporter

Carbon officials reiterated plans last week to construct a courthouse to replace the current facility, now in its 47th year.

In a special meeting on Dec. 14, county commissioners agreed to move forward with plans to build a new facility and shot down a proposal to place earnest money on a potential site for the new courthouse.

County officials estimated that they would need at least five acres to build the courthouse. However, the estimates are preliminary, as the county has not performed an analysis of how large of a facility is needed or how it will be constructed.

The county courthouse is nearing its 50th year, when the building will become eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

If the courthouse is listed in the register and the county determines that the building should be demolished, getting it removed from the national listing can delay or even prohibit demolition.

And as is stands, the costs associated with and renovation are prohibitive.

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Tuesday December 19, 2006 113th Year - No. 101

Company lays off 114 miners, halts Tower production

By CHARLES MCMANUS
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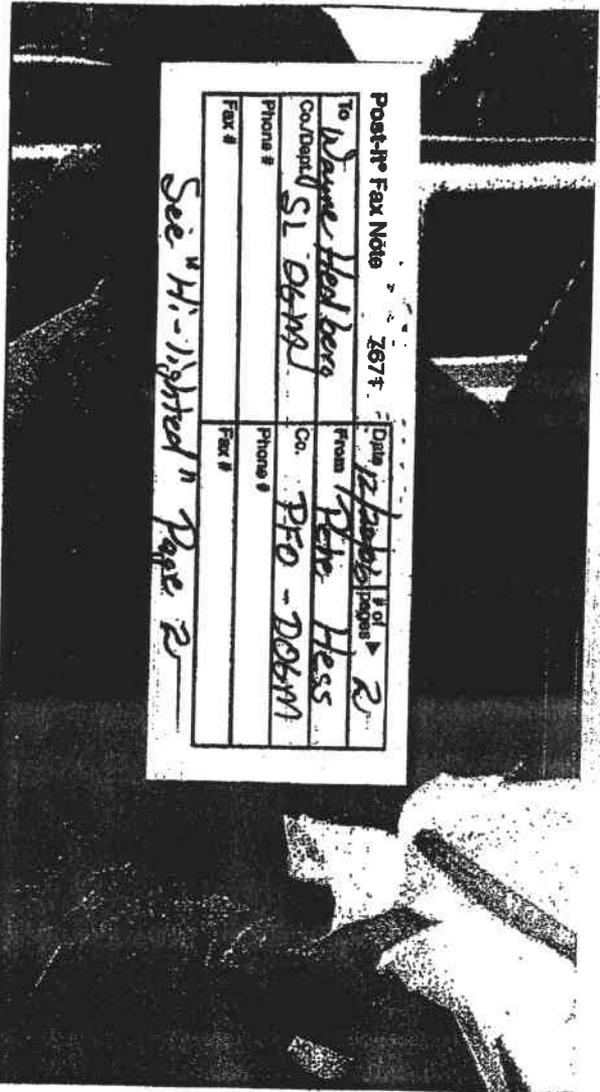
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Clifford Duncan and Kathy Green examine a flute after the arte was removed from its resting place high in the cliffs above Range

DWR officer discovers

By RICHARD SHAW
Sun Advocate publisher

A chance discovery by a Utah Division of Wildlife Resources conservation officer has led to a relic of the past in Range Creek.

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Clifford Duncan and Kathy Green examine a flute after the ancient artifact was removed from its resting place high in the cliffs above Range Creek. The 11th-century artifact is one of the most important historical finds in the area.

DWR officer discovers ancient

By RICHARD SHAW
Sun Advocate publisher

A chance discovery by a Utah Division of Wildlife Resources conservation officer has led to a relic of the past in Range Creek.

The artifact will be displayed near the famous Pilling Figurines at the College of Eastern Utah Prehistoric Museum in Price.

"I saw there was a granary or habitation site on a cliff so I hiked up to it and was trying to get around on a small ledge that led to it," explained Alan Green on Dec. 16.

Green, other DWR personnel, archaeologists, museum representatives and a Ute Indian tribal councilman drove to the site of the discovery on Saturday.

"I crawled around one narrow outcropping and looked at the ledge and decided to turn back. As I turned around, there it was, lodged in a crack in the rock right in front of me. I had passed it and hadn't seen it, but it sure was obvious as I turned to go back," continued Green.

The object the DWR officer had spotted was an ancient 27-inch long flute. When Green

reported the discovery to his superiors and fellow officers, a group of DWR personnel went to the site to decide what to do about the flute.

The initial discovery took place in late fall. While the flute may have been lodged in the rocks for up to a thousand years, officials were concerned about what could happen to the relic during the winter or in the next couple of months until seasonal snows closed the canyon.

DWR personnel contacted the individuals involved in the purchase and creation of the Range Creek protection area three years ago.

When the state secured the money to purchase the area from rancher Waldo Wilcox, few officials realized the cultural heritage that existed in the canyon. It was originally purchased as an area for fishing and hunting because Wilcox had preserved the property as it was in the early 1950s when he had purchased the land.

But as state officials started to survey the property, they found a rich cultural heritage area filled with sites from the Fremont culture. Today, the canyon is considered one of the most important historical sites in the area. (Continued on page 13A)

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County officials estimated that the new courthouse would cost at least \$10 million.

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