

TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

Utah Coal Regulatory Program

JK

January 7, 2008

TO: Internal File

THRU: Pamela Grubaugh Littig, Permit Supervisor *pgl*
Joe Helfrich, Team Lead *JH*

FROM: David Darby, Sr. Reclamation Specialist *DD*

RE: Midterm Permit Review, Mountain Coal Company LLC, Gordon Creek #2, #7, and #8 Mines, C/007/0016, Task ID #2757

SUMMARY:

The midterm review for the Gordon Creek #2, #7, and #8 Mines was initiated for the geological and hydrological aspects of the mine permit. The following items were considered in the midterm review process.

A review of the mine plan to ensure that the requirements of all permit conditions, division orders, notice of violation abatement plans, and Permittee initiated plan changes are appropriately incorporated into the mine plan document.

A review of the applicable portions of the permit to ensure that the mine plan contains commitments for application of the best technology currently available (BTCA) to prevent additional contributions of suspended solids to stream flows outside of the permit area.

The Division may conduct a technical site visit in conjunction with the assigned compliance inspector to document the status and effectiveness of operational, reclamation, and contemporaneous reclamation practices.

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ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE INFORMATION

Regulatory Reference: Pub. L 95-87 Sections 507(b), 508(a), and 516(b); 30 CFR 783., et. al.

GENERAL

Regulatory Reference: 30 CFR 783.12; R645-301-411, -301-521, -301-721.

Analysis:

The mines are located in Bryner Canyon approximately 20 miles northwest of Price, Utah and can be located on the Jump Creek 7.5 minute quadrangle map. Swisher Mining Company originally disturbed the No.2 mine in late 1969. No topsoil was salvaged at the site during construction. Coal refuse was dumped along the embankments of the stream channel of Bryner Canyon. Mountain Coal Company permanently sealed the portal in 1985.

The No. 7 Mine was disturbed in 1983. Extensive excavation occurred which left an escarpment about eighty feet high. The No.7 Mine portal was sealed in December 1990. Approximately fifty feet of the escarpment was covered during regrading and channels were reestablished.

The No. 8 Mine was opened in 1989 and then sealed in 1990. Due to poor mining conditions, the operator was forced to close the mine shortly after opening it.

The No. 7 and No. 8 mine sites were backfilled and regarded in 1997. Reclamation of the No. 2 mine began in 1998.

On October 9, 2003, the Division granted Phase I bond release for the all areas with the exception of the Sweet's Pond area. The Division granted the Sweet's Pond area Phase III bond release on October 9, 2003.

The Phase II bond release application (Task #2384) was received on December 12, 2005. The Permittee applied for Phase II bond release for \$146,578.00. This includes the 32.52 acres of reclaimed mine disturbance. The disturbed area at the Gordon Creek No. 2, No. 7 and No. 8 Mines contains 34.15 acres. Three sediment ponds cover an area of 1.63 acres were recently reclaimed as part of the Phase II reclamation plan. The hydrologic features and pond site were inspected in regard to the Midterm review, and is applicable to the final Phase II bond release.

RECLAMATION PLAN

HYDROLOGIC INFORMATION

Regulatory Reference: 30 CFR Sec. 784.14, 784.29, 817.41, 817.42, 817.43, 817.45, 817.49, 817.56, 817.57; R645-301-512, -301-513, -301-514, -301-515, -301-532, -301-533, -301-542, -301-723, -301-724, -301-725, -301-726, -301-728, -301-729, -301-731, -301-733, -301-742, -301-743, -301-750, -301-751, -301-760, -301-761.

Analysis:

Hydrologic Reclamation Plan

The Division conducted a midterm inspection review of the main facilities on November 7, 2007 to observe and evaluate of the reclaimed minesite for the Midterm permit review. BTCA has been implemented and appears to be functioning.

Vegetation

Vegetation is well established over the minesite. A high percentage of alfalfa is established which helps protect the surface against erosion.

Erosion

The road cuts and exposed rock shelf remaining after backfilling and grading have sluffed from the steep grade creating a more natural looking slope. Vegetation has become established on much of the slopes and more heavily along the toes of the slopes affording more protection against erosion.

Tributary Channels

The five tributary channels were observed. All appear very stable and vegetation is growing well along the channels. No down cutting was observed. There were no adverse problems of sedimentation, especially with the first channel where logging activities has contributed high volumes of sediment to the channel previously.

Main Channel

The main channel was observed and appeared stable with vegetation growing along the banks. No adverse impacts were observed.

Sedimentation Ponds

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The sedimentation ponds were recently reclaimed. An evaluation of the reclaimed areas was conducted during the Phase II Bond release site evaluation on September 28, 2006. The channel has been reestablished. The operator appears to have established a good mean relationship between the upper and lower channels. The channel was strait but well reinforced. It was commented that the channel could have been built with more sinuosity to lessen the slope and appear more natural. It appears the channel is functioning well.

Water Monitoring

The Permittee has submitted water monitoring information to the DOGM Water Quality database on a quarterly basis. Data has not identified adverse impacts and no UPDES discharges have been recorded.

Findings:

The information provided by the Permittee and site evaluation permits the Division to determine the Gordon Creek Minesite and operator meet the requirement established for the Midterm Permit review.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended the Midterm Permit be approved with regard to the hydrologic requirements listed in the Summary Section noted above.