

Sun Advocate June 25/1998

gan. The kids agreed at the beginning of the venture that even if no one caught a fish, they still planned to learn and have a fun day. Apparently, hopes came true as the outing lasted for a couple of hours. Most of the kids caught a bevy of small ones that had to be thrown back, with the exception of Kristen - she landed a 'nice one,' big enough to keep. Besides



learning how to catch a fish, the group wanted to know how to handle one when it was on the line as well as what to do with a fish once it was caught and re-

ally theirs. Expectations of baiting hooks and 'gutting' the end product were high on the list of what the boys wanted to do - the girls were a little less en-

thusiastic at the prospect. In the end, with or without a sunburn, it was reported a good time was had by all.  
- Ann Kay Marsing

ACT/007/1017 #2

# Mine reclamation finished at Gordon Creek

Approximately 12 miles west of town, a narrow dirt road winds up a small, quiet canyon that leads to 7,000 acres owned by the Cal Jacobs family.

With a variety of grasses, brushes and scrub oak, the canyon is primarily mid-grade rangeland that supports varied wildlife.

Twenty years ago, the scene was vastly different.

The small canyon hosted two underground coal mines, operated by Mountain Coal Co., a subsidiary of Atlantic Richfield Corp. (ARCO). More than 20 acres of land was torn up to accommodate mining activities and facilities.

The narrow dirt road was once twice as wide, with double-trailer trucks lumbering regularly up the canyon to retrieve nearly 1.2 million tons of coal.

Today, remnants of the mines, known as Gordon Creek No. 3 and No. 6, are almost invisible to the untrained eye, thanks to federally mandated reclamation efforts by ARCO.

The road has been reduced to its original size. Vegetation

thrives where once stood stockpiles of freshly mined coal. Giant holes, or portals, punched into the side of the canyon have been sealed. A stream bed, formerly a culvert beneath the mining operation, has been restored to its natural path.

Last week the reclaimed mines, along with a mine in Huntington Canyon gained the distinction of becoming the first sites in the West to complete the "mining-to-reclamation cycle" since passage of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) of 1977.

"We're really proud to be the first ones doing this in the West," said Mary Ann Wright, associate director of the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining (DOG M). "This is our mission: to make sure people operate responsibly in reclaiming the land."

To celebrate, state and federal regulators toured the sites with company officials last week, then held a banquet and ceremony in which regulators formally released the companies from some \$700,000 in bonds.

"Many people in our division

were skeptical that coal mines could be reclaimed to their pre-mining state," said Lowell Braxton, acting director of DOGM. "But we're confident we can do it now."

For Dick Pick, president of Canyon Fuel Co., which now owns Mountain Coal, the release of the bonds comes as recognition that his company cares about the environment. Canyon Fuel's three existing mines in Utah account for 40 percent of the state's coal production.

"It's nice to have it done. A lot of our employees use this canyon for recreation. They love to hunt and fish, and they're the last ones who would want to harm the land," Pick said.

Reclaiming the mines is an arduous process that begins with reclamation plans before the mines are opened. In contrast to strip mines in the East and South, most mines in Utah are underground, meaning minimal surface disturbance, typically 10 to 25 acres per mine.

Generally, reclamation consists of:

- Sealing the portals to pre-

vent release of methane gas and to keep people out.

- Removing on-site facilities.
- Ripping up concrete and burying it deep.
- Recounting the area to its natural shape.
- Restoring streams and drainages to their natural courses.

• Planting vegetation to match off-site vegetation.

Then comes the waiting.

The site must be monitored for at least 10 years to ensure the new vegetation is self-sustaining and self-regenerating. The 10-year waiting period is necessary because of the West's arid climate, which can stymie revegetation efforts. In the East, the wait is generally five years.

From a utilitarian view, the land is better than before.

Sediment capture ponds from the mine were left behind to serve as watering holes for cattle and sheep.

Some of the new vegetation included Great Basin rye and clover, which are grazing feed for domestic livestock as well as for elk.

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## Local mines complete reclamation cycle

Two Carbon County coal operations have achieved the distinction of becoming the first in the western United States to complete the reclamation cycle since passage of the federal coal mining act 20 years ago.

Completion of the cycle means that Utah's Canyon Coal Company affiliate, Mountain Coal Company, will have its financial security bonds released. Posted with the state in 1969 and 1977, the bonds totaled \$706,104 when the mines were operational.

Under federal and Utah laws, a mining company must post a reclamation bond with the

state before operations begin and, when disturbed land is returned to pre-mining condition, the bond is released back to the company.

"This marks a great success in a cooperative relationship between Utah's coal mining companies and the state," commented Mary Ann Wright, Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining associate director.

"The company has mined the resource, reclaimed the surface land disturbances and the land has been returned to wildlife and grazing uses. This is how the process is intended to work and in this case it has

worked well," added Wright.

Located about 20 miles from Price, Huntington Canyon four and Gordon Creek three and six mines operated intermittently since the 1940s. Huntington Canyon closed in 1984 and the Gordon Creek mines closed in 1980.

Reclamation work by the mining company began shortly after shutdown with portal sealing, reshaping the land and planting for wildlife species. The vegetation then had to be established for 10 years before the bond could be released.

"We're pleased our commitment to responsible mining

practices is so ably demonstrated by the work at this site," pointed out Dick Pick, Canyon Fuel president. "It's gratifying to know that precious natural resources can be mined and the land returned to a usable pre-mined condition afterward."

Before a bond may be released, the reclaimed site must pass established state and federal standards and rigorous scientific testing and long-term monitoring.

State and company officials will tour the site June 17 prior to an evening celebration to formally release the bonds on the reclaimed mining sites.

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# Milestone Achieved in Mine Reclamation

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Two Carbon County coal mines have achieved the distinction of becoming the first mines in the western United States to complete a mining through reclamation cycle since passage of the federal coal mining act 20 years ago. The successful completion of this cycle means that Utah's Canyon Company, L.L.C. affiliate, Mountain Coal Company, will have financial security bonds fully released, which were posted with the state in 1969 and 1977. When the mines were fully operational the bonds totaled \$706,104.

Under both federal and state laws, a mining company must post a reclamation bond with the state before operations begin, and when disturbed land is returned to pre-mining condition that bond is released back to the company.

"This marks a great success in a cooperative relationship between Utah's coal mining companies and the state," said Mary Ann Wright, associate director for mining for the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining. "The company has mined the resource, reclaimed the surface land disturbances and the land has been returned to wildlife and grazing uses. This is how the process is intended to work and in this case it has

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## 2 Carbon County mines first in West to be restored

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By JOSEPHINE ZIMMERMAN  
The Daily Herald

**CARBON COUNTY** — Two coal mines in Carbon County are the first in the West to be reclaimed and restored to wildlife and grazing uses.

Mary Ann Wright, associate director for mining for the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining, said the two mines are the first in the West to complete restoration projects since passage of the federal Coal Mining Act 20 years ago. They will receive a total of \$706,104 in financial security bonds posted when the mines were opened in 1969 and 1977.

Utah's Canyon Company LLC, Mountain Coal Company began restoration of the mines shortly after its

Huntington Canyon Mine No.4, and Gordon Creek No. 3 and No. 6 closed. The areas have now been returned to a usable pre-mined condition, according to Dick Pick, president and CEO of Canyon Fuel. Pick said the company is pleased that its commitment to responsible mining practices was so ably demonstrated by work at the sites.

Located about 20 miles from Price, the Huntington Canyon and Gordon Creek mines operated intermittently since the 1940s. The Huntington Canyon mine closed in 1984, and the Gordon Creek mines in 1980. Reclamation work by the mining company began shortly after shutdown, with portal sealing, reshaping the land and planting for wildlife species.

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