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United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Moab District
P. O. Box 970
Moab, Utah 845323482
SL-051279
(UT-065c)

JAN 13 1993

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DIVISION OF
LAND MANAGEMENTCERTIFIED MAIL - Return Receipt Requested
Certification No. P 696 298 121Mr. Tom Paluso
Chief Engineer
Soldier Creek Coal Co.
P.O. Box 1
Price, Utah 84501

RE: Minor Modification to the Soldier Canyon Mine - Partial Pillars Extraction in the 6th North, the 5th North and the 3rd North 5th East Sections

Dear Mr. Paluso:

On December 7, 1992, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) received a telephone request from Soldier Creek Coal Company (SCCC) to modify the approved resource recovery and protection plan (R2P2) for the Soldier Canyon Mine. Price Coal Office personnel inspected the mine, evaluated the situation, and then granted a verbal approval to SCCC for a minor modification to the approved mine plan on December 9, 1992. A formal written request for the minor modification was received on December 8, 1992. SCCC also submitted additional information regarding this mine plan change on December 14 and 22, 1992. The reserves in question are located in the Rock Canyon Seam on Federal coal lease SL-051279.

The approved plan for pillar retreat mining in the 6th North section was to fully extract pillar rows from north to south, with each row consisting of five pillars. One pillar in each row was left on the west side for a bleeder. Presently, the continuous miner is mining in the 5th pillar of pillar row #14 in by the 14th crosscut. The company is now proposing to abandon this row and the other three pillar rows to the south (rows #11 - #13). Starting with row #10, SCCC plans to implement a partial pillar extraction instead of the full pillar extraction originally planned (see enclosure). SCCC is expecting to utilize the partial extraction plan in the 6th North, the 5th North and the 3rd North 5th East sections.

According to SCCC, the modification is necessary due to the severe bouncing in the section which has deteriorated the pillars and caused roof failure. Shale and sandy shale material associated with roof fall has increased ash content in the overall mine production. It was jointly determined by the mine management and the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) inspector that further extraction in the present pillar line could not be continued safely. Large caves and weak roof conditions in the 6th North, the 5th North and the 3rd

Jim Davis route 4 bit

ACT 007/018

Folder #2

North 5th East sections encouraged the company to propose using the partial pillar extraction plan.

A file search indicated that this section was developed on 80 x 80 foot centers. A 9 foot mining height is presently being mined under 1750 feet of overburden. The 6th North section was inspected by a BLM mining engineer on December 7, 1992. During the inspection, approximately 8 ft of the immediate roof in the #14 crosscut and pillars cave line were examined. The immediate roof was approximately 2 feet of coal overlain by 4 to 8 inches of sandyshale and 12 inches of soft shale. Approximately 5 to 6 feet of weak, laminated strata followed by a sandstone top were also observed behind the mined out pillars. The top coal was fracturing due to the bouncing activities in the section. The overlain shale and sandyshale were falling above the continuous miner which diluted the coal production.

On December 9, 1992, the 6th North section was reinspected. Floor heave, roof fractures, severe rib bursts and pillar failure were observed between #12 and #14 crosscuts. The #14 crosscut was experiencing a major roof fall, where plates were pulled out of the roof bolts due to extreme vertical pressures. Bouncing activities were expanding to approximately 200 to 300 feet behind the section's continuous miner.

Large caves were observed at the mouth of the 7th North section. The immediate roof strata in the caved material consisted of the same lamination observed at the 6th North section. Roof coal was also observed in the 6th North, the 5th North and the 3rd North 5th East sections. A discussion with SCCC representatives indicates that the top coal was left to protect crew members from roof falls and minimize ash dilution in the overall production. Independent calculations conducted by a BLM engineer indicate that a pillar size of 80 x 80 foot centers is marginal for 1500 to 1750 feet of cover.

The combination of a shale roof, the sandstone formation above the shale, and marginal pillar sizes have created an unsafe condition. The proposed plan of leaving three complete pillar rows and one partial row (16 pillars) should be an adequate barrier to support the overriding stresses in the 6th North section. Partial pillar extraction will redistribute the vertical and horizontal pressures as a precaution against further bounces. Also, the partial pillar extraction will delay the immediate roof from caving which will protect coal production from added dilution.

Under the present circumstances, Price Coal Office personnel agree with this proposal to abandon these pillars to reduce safety risks to the mining crew. The MSHA approved partial pillar extraction plan for the 6th North section is adequate and can be utilized for the 5th North and the 3rd North 5th East sections, in coordination with the authorized officer of the BLM. Full pillar extraction should be implemented when mining conditions allow.

BLM has determined that the mine plan change is in compliance with the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended, the regulations at 43 CFR 3480, the lease terms and stipulations, and will achieve maximum economic recovery of the Federal coal. Therefore, the BLM will allow the mine plan change. This confirms the verbal approval given to Soldier Creek Mine personnel on December 9, 1992. An estimated 120,000 tons of recoverable coal reserves are now deemed unrecoverable. A copy of the approved mine map is enclosed.

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If you have any questions, please contact Abe Elias in the Price Coal Office at 801/637-4584.

Sincerely,



for

Assistant District Manager
Mineral Resources

Enclosure:
Approved Mine Map

cc: DM, Moab (UT-065) (w/enclosure)
SD, Utah (UT-921) (w/enclosure)
✓ UDOGM, Salt Lake City (w/enclosure)

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MINERAL RESOURCES

MINOR MODIFICATION TO
MINING PLAN APPROVED BY
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

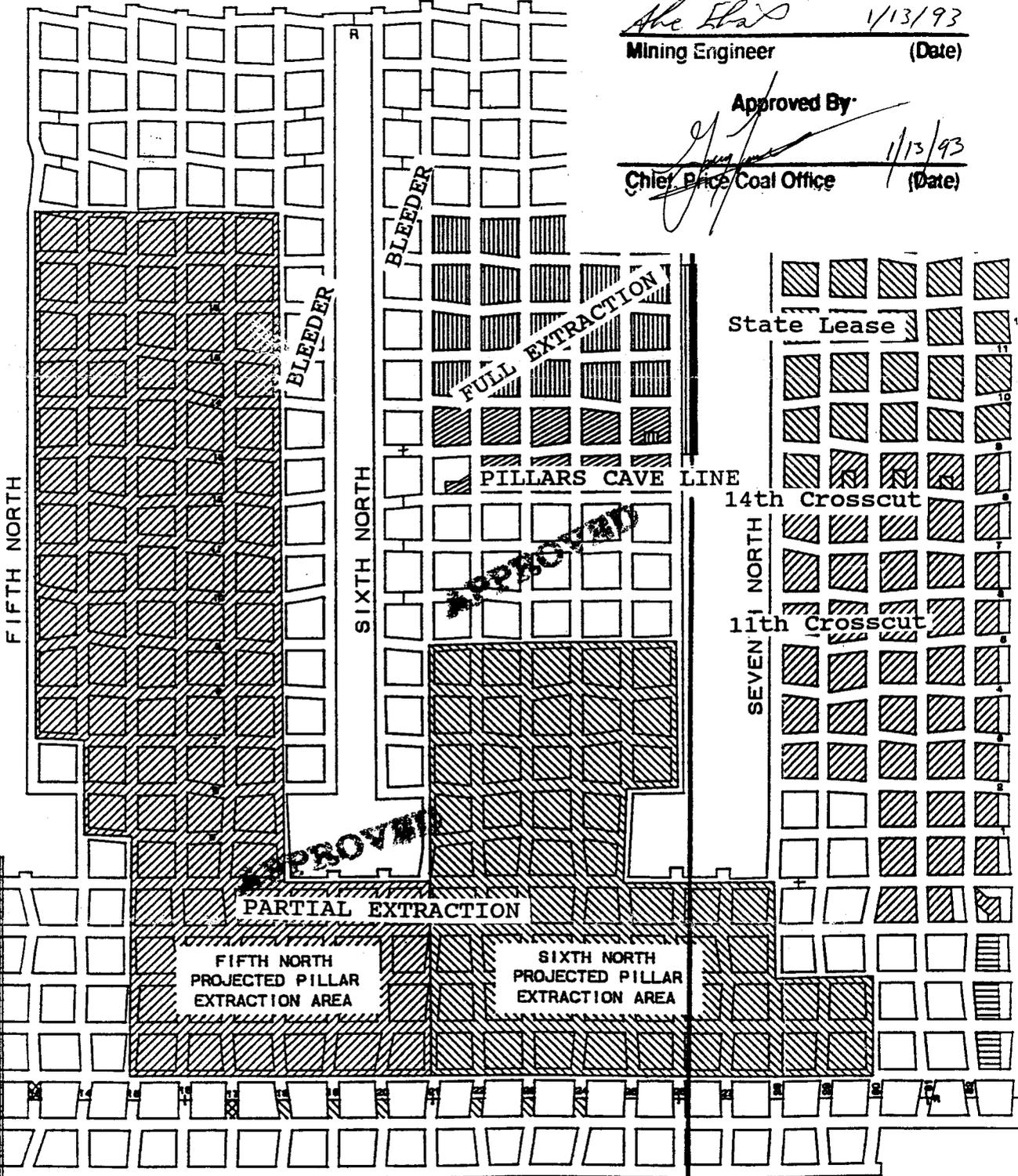
Federal Lease SL-051279

Recommended By:

Abel Elax 1/13/93
Mining Engineer (Date)

Approved By:

[Signature] 1/13/93
Chief Price/Coal Office (Date)



THIRD NORTH FIFTH EAST

SOLDIER CREEK COAL COMPANY
SOLDIER CANYON MINE
ROCK CANYON SEAM
APPROVED MINE MAP