

0008



State of Utah
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF OIL, GAS AND MINING

Michael O. Leavitt
Governor
Ted Stewart
Executive Director
James W. Carter
Division Director

1594 West North Temple, Suite 1210
Box 145801
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-5801
801-538-5340
801-359-3940 (Fax)
801-538-7223 (TDD)

July 1, 1997

TO: File

THRU: Joe Helfrich, Permit Supervisor 

FROM: Susan M. White, Senior Reclamation Biologist 

RE: Coal Exploration Plan, Lease UTU-69635, Canyon Fuel Company, LLC, Soldier Canyon Mine, ACT/007/018-97A, Folder #2, Carbon County, Utah

SUMMARY:

The Division has received a copy of Coal Exploration Plan, Federal Coal Lease UTU-69635 from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), date received June 2, 1997. The BLM has requested the Division to review and provided any conditions for approval.

The exploration drilling is proposed to be conducted within Soldier Creek Coal Company's newly permitted Alkali Lease. Three drill holes are proposed to be drilled this year on private and fee surface with Federal coal. This reviewer does not recommend approval of the exploration drilling program.

ANALYSIS:

The resource information provided in the plan is mostly missing. The Permittee has committed to conduct surveys spring 1997 as follow:

- threatened and endangered plant
- raptor
- Archeological and paleontological

However, these surveys have not been submitted with the application. These surveys should be incorporated into the exploration plan for review prior to approval.

The plan states that a raptor survey is to be done this past spring. The survey

should focus on tree nests which could possibly be disturbed since the drilling likely will not occur before July 15, which is the critical date for nesting raptors.

Over one mile of road may be built. Three drill holes are proposed, four proposed drill holes are shown on the map accompanying the application. The application fails to provide adequate detail for road construction and reclamation. A typical drawing may help provide missing detail, particularly road construction on slopes. No detail is given for construction and reclamation of roads and pads on land belonging to Louise L. Iriart. The application is unclear if topsoil will be salvaged and then respread on roads on Mrs. Iriart's land.

The application states that mulch will be used in reclamation, however, the type and rate of mulch to be used is not specified. Mulch and seed will be run over with dozer cleats for incorporation. The Division currently does not recommend this method since this techniques tends to reduce surface roughness. A bucket of a trackhoe or backhoe can be used to pock the surface as well as incorporate noxious weed free straw or hay during reclamation.

The proposed seed mixture is given on page 5 of the application. The Division recommends that the native plant species Northern sweetvetch be substituted for yellow sweet clover. While Salina wildrye would be a great reclamation species to plant it often is commercially unavailable. Salina wildrye may be hand collection in mid-July. Possible substitutions or additions to the seed mixture are western wheatgrass and slender wheatgrass.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following items should be addressed prior to approval:

- Resource information must be included in the application. Resource information includes but is not limited to: surveys for threatened and endangered species, raptors and nests, and archeological surveys.
- Greater detail must be provided for road construction and reclamation. The detail should include typical maps and topsoil salvage and distribution.
- Construction and reclamation plans for roads and pads on Mrs. Iriart's land must be provided prior to approval.
- Northern sweetvetch should be substituted for yellow sweetclover. Western wheatgrass and slender wheatgrass may be added to the seed mixture.

ACT/007/018-97A

July 1, 1997

Page 3

- The rate and type of mulch to be used in reclamation must be specified. The Division recommends that a certified noxious weed free hay or straw be used.
- A pocking with a bucket of a trackhoe or backhoe should be used for mulch incorporation rather than dozer cleats.

O:\007018.SOL\FINAL\SOLDIER.97A