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White Oak application until those rules are out. Under those rules BLM probably will reject White Oak's LMU application, the BLM official noted. There is still an unresolved question

though about whether existing LMU applications should be grandfathered in under the old rules, he added.

White Oak is controlled by Scott and Todd Kiscaden.

ACT/007/020
#2

Kiscadens work on BLM \$ problem

Scott and Todd Kiscaden, the owners of White Oak Mining & Construction, have fallen behind in recent months on payments for their federal leases at White Oak, said a Bureau of Land Management official.

The Kiscadens are working with BLM to try and make up those payments, but with no final resolution so far on how to do that, the agency official added.

In the meantime, the past-due payments might endanger efforts by the Kiscadens to lease new federal reserves for their nearby Horizon Coal operation, which is in development and might be producing this fall. The Kiscadens bought Horizon earlier this year from a Virginia-based company (CO 5/5). The

company had applied to lease some BLM reserves for Horizon and the lease sale could be held in the next couple of months.

But the BLM official noted that under BLM rules any operator has to be in good shape on lease payments for existing reserves before it can lease new ones. The Kiscadens told BLM that they will make up the White Oak payments, so there is no problem. They also told BLM that Horizon and White Oak are separate operations, so White Oak's problems shouldn't be held against Horizon. BLM believes the Kiscadens provide the common link between the two companies, though. The question of how to deal with this situation also is unresolved.

Efforts to reach Scott Kiscaden last week were unsuccessful.

Utah producers hope they can handle 2,000 feet

As their shallower reserves deplete, a fundamental question facing Utah coal producers is whether they can mine at depths of 2,000 feet or more.

That was a question making the rounds at the recent Western Coal Council conference in Utah. One speaker at the conference was Richard Pick, president of Canyon Fuel, which owns the former Coastal Coal mines in Utah. Asked by an audience member whether he thinks Canyon and others can operate at 2,000 feet or more, Pick said working at that depth can be done today, and he is confident that technology improvements will definitely make it more workable in the future.

Another speaker, Alan Stagg, the head of the consulting firm Stagg Engineering Services, was asked the same question. Stagg said that generally there "are no problems that can't be overcome" in working at 2,000 feet or more.

AMAX Coal's Castlegate mine was at about 2,000 feet when it was shut in the late 1980s due to pressure-induced bursts at the mine face. But one mine expert noted that a big problem for AMAX was the roof at Castlegate wasn't collapsing behind the longwall shields as quickly as planned, which put more pressure on the coal seam, causing the bursts. So mining at that depth can be attacked at several levels, such as with improved roof control methods, not just at the face, he noted.

Some lessons also can be drawn from Sunnyside Mining and Mid-Continent Resources, which had Utah operations

that shut several years ago at least in part due to high costs from mining at 2,000 feet and lower. For Sunnyside and MCR, and most any other deep operation, the biggest problem is bursts at the faces for continuous miner units that are setting up longwall panels. Longwalls themselves, due to their supporting shields, tend to see fewer pressure problems at the face.

For example, MCR used to drill and blast its CM faces when pressure started to build. That relieved overlying pressures. MCR also drilled and blasted the longwall face on occasion, said a local mining expert. The blasting worked, but it caused mining downtime that cut deeply into productivity.

Another method for relieving the pressure is to reduce the number of entries from three or four to two, said the local expert. Reducing the number of entries reduces the number of faces, meaning there are less faces to burst.

Of note is that Cyprus Amax Coal is going back into the Castlegate reserve area at its new Willow Creek mine. But its initial operations are in other reserves, and Cyprus isn't expected to consistently work at the 2,000-foot-level for several years. Much of its initial mining will be in coal at 1,700 feet or more of depth.

A source familiar with Canyon Fuel's Skyline mine notes the operation periodically works at 2,000 feet of cover already, due to seam rolls that take it that deep. He said almost every Utah mine th

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The report says right-of-way acquisition has begun and will continue through summer 1998. "TRR has commissioned DuBray Land Services Inc. of Billings, Montana, to direct and manage all tasks and services related to this process," the report says.

Regarding its collaboration with Burlington Northern Santa Fe, the report states, "A working relationship has been established,

Tongue River RR begins right-o

The Tongue River Railroad has begun acquisition of right of way and hopes to begin construction of its 129-mile line in the spring of 1999.

The railroad still believes it essential to be "operational and available" during anticipated expansion of the Montana coal market between 2001 and 2003, said President Mike Gustafson. The tentative schedule is part of the railroad's four-month progress report filed July 15 with the Surface Transportation Board. The board required the report as part of its 1996 approval of the project.

A large part of the report explains the company's petition

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AC 7/07/020
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A large part of the report explains the company's petition

asking the STB to reopen the case and consider its request for a new alignment on the southern end of the proposed line (*see separate story*). The report's "timeline" anticipates the STB will issue a final decision on the proposed "western alternative" by the end of 1997.

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