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

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

Michael O. Leavitt  
Governor  
Lowell P. Braxton  
Division Director

July 27, 1998

TO: File

THRU: Joe Helfrich, Permit Supervisor *JCH*

FROM: Paul Baker, Reclamation Biologist *PBB*

RE: Dugout Canyon Area Exploration, Canyon Fuel Company, Dugout Mine, ACT/007/039-EX98A, Folder #2, Carbon County, Utah

**SUMMARY:**

In June 1998, the Division received a revised proposal from Canyon Fuel to drill four exploratory drill holes in its Dugout Mine permit area. According to the proposal, all activities would be on State or private land except some access would be on federal land. Two road sections would need to be built, and the other roads would probably need to be upgraded.

The notice of intention (NOI) contains commitments to gather information about threatened or endangered species and archaeological resources, but since it does not contain this information, it is impossible for the Division to make a determination of potential effects.

**TECHNICAL ANALYSIS:**

**ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

Regulatory Reference: R645-201-200

**Analysis:**

Canyon Fuel Company has proposed to drill four exploratory holes in the area of its Dugout Mine. They would be on State or private land with some access occurring across federal land. The NOI includes the applicant's name, address, telephone number; it shows the name of the applicant's agent; and it gives information about the exploration area. It was anticipated exploration would begin in mid-July and definitely completed before big game hunting season, normally mid-October.

**Findings:**

Information provided in the proposal is considered adequate to meet the requirements of this section of the regulations.

**OPERATIONAL STANDARDS**

Regulatory Reference: R645-202-231

**Analysis:**

Portions of the area where exploration would occur contain high priority wildlife habitat, but the exploration would be done at a time of year when disturbance would have the least effect on any wildlife. Therefore, there should be few or no adverse effects on wildlife.

The only plant species of concern that might occur in the area is canyon sweetvetch (*Hedysarum occidentale* var. *canone*). This species was formerly proposed for listing as threatened, but it is no longer under consideration although the Bureau of Land Management continues to manage it as a sensitive species. The sites on top of the plateau do not contain habitat for this species, but the canyon areas do up to a little below the elevation of the coal seam. Since the two sites in the canyons are above the coal seam and since the roads to these sites already exist, there is little likelihood plants of this species would be disturbed.

The Division's rules do not require cultural resources information, but other laws do. The applicant has committed to conduct surveys to determine if these resources exist, and they will need to obtain a clearance from the State Historic Preservation Office.

**Findings:**

Information provided in the proposal is considered adequate to meet the requirements of this section of the regulations.

**RECLAMATION STANDARDS**

Regulatory Reference: R645-202-242

**Analysis:**

In reclamation, soil will be redistributed and roughened. Shortly after soil redistribution, disturbed areas will be seeded with a mix shown in the NOI, and the seed will be worked into the

soil by roughening the surface with a dozer or backhoe or by dragging the area. Disturbed areas will be mulched with 2000 pounds per acre of certified noxious weed free straw or hay.

The seed mix contains three introduced species that are probably not essential for revegetation success, but since they are not overly aggressive species, the seed mix is acceptable. The species used should be capable of stabilizing the soil surface from erosion, and they are compatible with vegetation of the area.

The NOI says the seed mixture will be 95% pure live seed. While this is attainable, it is not a realistic or necessary commitment. The seed just needs to meet the requirements of the Utah Seed Act and be applied in the amounts specified in the NOI.

If seed is broadcast shortly after soil redistribution, it does not need to be worked into the soil too much. Using a dozer, for example, could decrease surface roughness and diminish revegetation success. The best treatment would probably be to lightly hand rake the area.

**Findings:**

Information provided in the proposal is considered adequate to meet the requirements of this section of the regulations. The applicant has committed to roughening the soil surface, and it is important that this roughness not be lost. Rather than working the seed into the soil with a dozer or backhoe, it would be better to hand rake the surface or to simply broadcast the seed and leave it.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The reviewed portions of the notice of intention are acceptable and can be approved. The Division recommends not working seed into the soil with a backhoe or dozer but, rather, hand raking it or simply broadcasting the seed and leaving it.