

February 20, 2003

TO: Internal File

THRU: Pamela Grubaugh-Littig, Permit Supervisor
Daron R. Haddock, Permit Supervisor

FROM: Jerriann Ernstsens, Reclamation Specialist/Biology

RE: Technical Field Visit, Proposed Refuse Pile Site and Reference Site, Canyon Fuel Company, LLC., Dugout Canyon, C/007/039

Other Attendees: Pete Hess (Division), Vicky Miller (Canyon Fuel Company)

Date & Time: January 30, 2003, afternoon.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the field visit to Dugout Canyon was to examine the proposed refuse pile site and reference site.

OBSERVATIONS:

SEE IMAGES 01302003 IN DATABASE.

REFERENCE AREA

The reference site for the proposed refuse pile is located approximately 200' west from the county road leading to the Dugout Canyon mine and approximately one mile north of the proposed refuse pile area. The reference site is one square acre and in fairly good condition. There has been grazing, although cattle were not present at time of this visit. There is no fence surrounding the reference site.

TECHNICAL FIELD VISIT

The most significant finding at the reference site was the cryptogammic soil. The amount of cryptogams probably covered at least 75% of the soil surface – eyeball estimation. Other findings include: soil type was very gravelly with large to small stones, community types were equally split between sage/grass and pinyon/juniper, and plant coverage is partial.

There were colonies of a hooked cactus species. George S. Cook of NRCS surveyed the site in 1998 and noted the cactus as ‘Fish hook’. Ben Franklin of DWR verifies from an image taken January 30, 2003 that the colonies in the image are not *Sclerocactus wrightiae*.

PROPOSED REFUSE PILE AREA

The area of and surrounding the permit area for the refuse site has a history of disturbances related to actions other than coal mining. Sometime before 1998, the permit area had been disturbed from unknown actions. Vicky Miller (2003, personal communications) suggested that the area had been disturbed from grazing and corral operations. This disturbance left most of the permit area basically clear of native vegetation. The perimeter of the permit area was left undisturbed. Native and introduced plant species filled in some of the disturbed area over time (see pictures Amendment 2003, Attachment 3-1). The number of years of growth from the end of the “corral” operations and the pictures taken in 1998 is unknown. Patricia Johnston conducted a plant survey prior to the disturbance related to gravel extraction operations in 1998. The area surveyed included the permit and surrounding areas.

In 1998, the permit area was disturbed by gravel extraction operations. The gravel was used to build the county road leading to Dugout mine. Gravel extraction operations left most of the permit area basically clear of vegetation. The perimeter of the permit area was again left undisturbed. Introduced plant species filled in very little of the disturbed area at this time (see pictures from field visit 01302003).

RECOMMENDATIONS/CONCLUSIONS:

It has been determined that:

- Gravel operations-related disturbed area within the proposed permit area will undergo construction in March of 2003 for the preparation of receiving coal refuse.
- Construction will not affect the areas previously left undisturbed by “corral” or gravel extraction operations.
- Construction will include a road from the current access road to sediment pond near the far south end of the permit area.
- The Division will visit the site immediately following construction in March 2003 to determine if protective measures are needed before the proposed July/August date.

- All areas previously disturbed by “corral” or gravel extraction operations will be prepared for seeding and seeded in July or August 2003. Procedure includes:
 - Clearing the area of weeds.
 - Ripping.
 - Interim seed mix will be broadcast in July or August 2003.
- Substitute topsoil and subsoil stockpiles will also be seeded with the interim seed mix.