ACT/015/009

United States Department of the Interior
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
AREA OFFICE COLORADO—UTAH
1311 FEDERAL BUILDING
125 SOUTH STATE STREET
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84138-1197

IN REPLY REFER TO:

November 10, 1982

Cleon Feight, Director
Division of Oil, Gas and Mining
4241 State Office Building
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114

Dear Mr. Feight:

This letter is written to inform you of two field trips to examine potentially hazardous powerlines within the permit boundaries of the mines described in your letter dated August 18, 1982. Mr. Ron Joseph of my staff has completed a review of the distribution lines of the following mining companies. Overall, he found no eagle remains beneath the lines examined nor does he suspect any problems with the lines in question. The following is a brief summary of each site visited and a description of the configuration examined. When possible, he examined the lines with company personnel.

Valley Camp of Utah Inc.

Mr. Joseph met with E.B. Foust, Chief Engineer to survey the lines of Valley Camp's Belina Mines and Utah #2. The three phase Belina lines for the most part traverse high timbered mountainous terrain. Previous Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) surveys have not shown a problem with powerlines in coniferous cover primarily because trees themselves offer much better perch sites than crossarms of power poles. As an added precaution, Mr. Foust pointed out to Mr. Joseph where Valley Camp has erected perch sites in areas where the Company believed a problem could exist within the Belina Mine complex. However, on close examination, the lines did not reveal any use by raptors.

Mr. Foust also toured Mr. Joseph through the Utah #2 Mine area across from its headquarters. Due to extensive mining near the facilities and associated human activity, it is unlikely that raptors would use the lines. Again, trees dominate the landscape and raptor perch use is undoubtedly confined to trees and ridges.

Utah Power and Light (UP&L); Des-Bee-Dove, Wilberg, Deer Creek Mines

Des-Bee-Dove

Ron Joseph met with Scott Rassmussen, UP&L District Manager in Castledale, Utah, to examine the forementioned mine sites. The Des-Bee-Dove mine lines consist predominantly of 69KV three phase powerlines. The configuration is safe since adequate conductor clearance exists on the 10-foot crossarms should an eagle attempt

to perch on the pole. Much of the line traverses habitat used by wintering golden eagles. In fact, an adult golden eagle was observed using one crossarm as a perch. Mr. Joseph walked segments of the 3-4 mile line passing through relatively flat, sparsely vegetated habitat and documented some use of the lines by raptors. However, no remains were found and more importantly the lines are constructed such that birds are not likely to be electrocuted when using the crossarms as perch sites.

Wilberg

Mr. Rassmussen also showed Mr. Joseph the Wilberg line. The three phase line is energized with 69KV and is constructed such that eagles and other raptors are not likely to be electrocuted. As with the Des-Bee-Dove line, the Wilberg line has adequate conductor clearance on the 8-foot crossarm and center pole. A minimum of 42 inches separates the conductor on the pole top and those on the crossarm. Approximately 1-2 miles of line traverses habitat used by jackrabbits and no remains of rabbits or eagles were evident beneath the crossarms. Therefore, we do not anticipate any electrocution problems with the Wilberg line.

Deer Creek

The Deer Creek Mine line is constructed without a crossarm. Raptors are unable to perch on the staggered conductors of the 12KV line thereby eliminating electrocution hazards.

Trail Mountain and Knight

Mr. Rassmussen accompanied Mr. Joseph in the field to examine the UP&L lines providing power to the Trail Mountain Mine, Natomas Coal Company. The 12KV lines parallel the road and are of an armless configuration; a design which is safe for raptors because it prevents perching. The Knight Mine is of the same configuration as the Trail Mountain Mine. No problems are expected with the lines to the Knight Mine.

Beaver Creek Coal Company, Castle Valley Spur

Dave Myers of Beaver Creek Coal Company met with Mr. Joseph at the C.V. Spur facility and both walked the length of the line. The armless configuration and close proximity of the line to the C.V. Spur accounts for the lack of raptor use of the powerlines.

In summary, Mr. Joseph examined the lines described in your August 18, 1982, letter and has not found any to be a threat to eagles or other raptors. Please feel free to contact us once again if we can be of additional assistance.

Sincerely,

Robert R. Nelson

Field Supervisor
Ecological Services

cc: OSM, Denver
DWR, SLC