November 27, 1987

TO: Coal File

FROM: Brent A. Stettler, Reclamation Biologist

RE: November 20, 1987 Waste Rock Wildlife Consultation, Utah Power and Light Company, Deer Creek Mine, ACT/015/018, Folder #2, Emery County, Utah

On November 20, 1987, Lynn Kunzler and I met with Utah Power and Light Company (UP&L) representatives in Huntington, Utah to discuss a new waste rock disposal site at the Deer Creek Mine. Utah Power and Light representatives included Ray Christensen, Larry Guymon, and Val Payne. Larry Dalton of the Division of Wildlife Resources also participated in the discussion.

The proposed waste rock disposal site is located (T.17S R.8E S6 NE and S.5NW) adjacent to UP&L's Huntington Power Plant, and involves approximately 22 acres of land. Ground cover appears to be less than 50 percent. Cover types include Pinyon pine, Utah juniper and scattered shrub/grassland. Dominant shrubs include sagebrush, rabbitbrush, shadscale, Cache Valley clover and buckwheat. Soils consisted primarily of blue Mancos shale. The site is situated in a natural basin. The surrounding rim is vegetated by pinyon-juniper woodland. Escarpments flank the north and west sides.

Utah Power and Light Company proposes to salvage 18" of soil, stockpiling it on the outside perimeter of the disposal site, which is to be developed on an as-needed basis over 25-30 years.

A Division of Wildlife Resources map of raptor nest locations showed no potential raptor conflicts with the site's development. A visual inspection of the area using binoculars, confirmed the absence of stick nests or eyries.

The most pressing wildlife development conflict was identified as elk and mule deer winter range. During our visit to the site, a considerable number of ungulate tracks and evidence of browsing were observed.

Mitigation of the impact to critical winter range was discussed. Larry Dalton suggested two options. The first option involved chaining and re-seeding nearby tracts to compensate for lost forage. He suggested that such range improvement work would be required at 5-year intervals over the life of the waste rock disposal site. The second option called for the lowering of an existing fence which precluded big game use of a pasture on the upper bench above the rock disposal site. The pasture in question is managed by UP&L's Farm Research Division. Larry Dalton recommended modification of the fence to meet 42" range fence standards.

Lynn Kunzler suggested that costs could be reduced if only certain sections of the fence were modified. With regard to revegetation of the waste rock disposal site, Lynn Kunzler recommended yearly sampling of waste rock for toxicity and implementation of a reclamation test plot to assess reclamation feasibility.

Utah Power and Light Company representatives seemed receptive to the ideas, but deferred comment until a later time.

djh
cc: J. Whitehead
1369R/2