



United States Department of the Interior
OFFICE OF SURFACE MINING
Reclamation and Enforcement
[REDACTED] Brooks Towers
1020-15th Street
DENVER, COLORADO 80202

FEBRUARY 14, 1980

#7

MR. RON DANIELS
COORDINATOR OF MINED LAND DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
1588 NORTH WEST TEMPLE
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84116

RECEIVED

FEB 19 1980

Dear MR. DANIELS:

DIVISION OF
OIL, GAS & MINING

Enclosed please find copies of on-site inspection reports. The inspections were conducted within COTTONWOOD CANYON MINE during the period of DECEMBER 7, 1979.

If you have any questions or problems, please contact this office.

Sincerely,

Murray I. Smith
Chief, Division of Inspection & Enforcement

REGION V ON-SITE INSPECTION REPORT

UTAH POWER & LIGHT COMPANY
COTTONWOOD CANYON MINE
P.O. Box 899
Salt Lake City, Utah 84110
(801) 350-3535

DATE: December 7, 1979
TIME: 9:20 a.m. - 11:25 a.m.
WEATHER: Cloudy, cool
COUNTY & STATE: Emery, Utah
COMPANY OFFICIALS: Jay Fulmer, H.E. Loudermilk Construction Company
STATE OFFICIAL: Jim Smith
OSM OFFICIALS: Gary Fritz, Dennis Winterringer

GENERAL COMMENTS

This proposed underground mine is located approximately 16 miles west of Orangeville, Utah, to the north of State Highway 29 and adjacent to a Forest Service road in Cottonwood Canyon. The site is located on the opposite side of the canyon from the Fetterolf Group's Trail Mountain Mine, which was actively producing coal on the date of the inspection. Prior to the inspection, the Forest Service had contacted Murray Smith, Assistant Regional Director, Division of Inspection and Enforcement, with concerns about possible environmental damage due to the operation. This inspection was made in response to this contact.

According to Jim Smith, the company had been issued an exploratory permit by the State of Utah, Division of Gas, Oil, and Mining (DGOM). The Office of Surface Mining has also apparently reviewed the plan and made comments on it. The area on which the mine portals will be constructed is fee simple private land, owned and/or leased by The Church of the Latter Day Saints. This fee simple land totals about 100 acres. Federal lands and coal borders this land, and the company plans to mine it through its Federal leases. OSM has contended it should review the exploratory permit plans since the exploration work now being conducted, including preliminary earth moving for site facilities, is intended to lead to the mining of Federal coal. A letter dated November 19, 1979, from Don Crane Regional Director, Region V, to the State of Utah stated the exploratory plan is incomplete for several noted reasons. These deficiencies were apparently never corrected. However, the State of Utah apparently deemed the application complete and issued the permit since the work was to be carried out on private lands.

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Upon arriving at the disturbance, Jay Fulmer, Foreman for H.E. Lowdermilk Construction Company, Englewood, Colorado, (main office) met the inspectors. Mr. Fulmer explained that the company had been contracted to do exploratory work at the site by Utah Power and Light Company. The earth moving and related work had begun approximately six weeks prior to inspection. He indicated work would be completed by the company sometime near the first of the year.

UTAH POWER & LIGHT CO/COTTONWOOD CANYON MINE

Activity at the site included earth moving by 4 dozers, 2 large rock haul trucks, 1 front end loader, and a small drill. The disturbances included three benches constructed by the equipment, hereafter referred from highest elevation on the side of the canyon to the lowest, as benches numbers 1, 2, and 3. Bench #1 was narrow and shorter in relation to the other two. Bench #2 was approximately 20 feet wide and 195 feet long. Several small unmineable coal seams were cut into by the top two benches. The outcrop coal along with rock and soil material was pushed off the edge downslope. Bench #3 consisted of a redisturbed old bench with two sealed portals and freshly disturbed extensions of that bench on both ends. The total length of bench #3 was 2100 feet and, according to Mr. Fulmer, 1600 feet was re-disturbance of the existing bench, and 500 feet was the new extension. It appeared that a greater proportion of the 2100 feet should be attributed to the new extensions. The outcrop coal and overburden material from bench #3 was also pushed downslope. The total width of bench #3 consisted of solid rock below the coal seam (8-9 feet thick) and the remainder, fill material from the three bench cuts.

Several problems were noted concerning the material spoiled downslope. Flagmen were stationed on the Forest Service road into the area because the rock and coal outcrop was actively being spoiled downslope to the very edge of the road. Large rocks were rolling onto and across the road. Several large (> 4 feet in diameter) boulders were observed in the stream which borders the road on the opposite side from the disturbances. The number of the boulders in the perennial stream were considerable in number and obstructed the flow in a 500 foot long section. Several trees adjacent to the road and stream were covered or damaged by the falling debris. Curt Curtis, one of the flagmen, stated that one of the rock ledges had been blasted and the rock was pushed downslope. The above mentioned damages were results of those actions.

No surface water runoff control devices were located at the toe of the spoil. The potential damage to the adjacent stream by increased sediment loads and possibly toxic material in the spoil is obvious. Mr. Fulmer was emphatic that none of the outcrop coal had been removed from the site, and that it had all been spoiled downslope. The severity of the problem is further increased by the steepness of the spoil outslope (35°) and the unconsolidated erodible nature of the spoil. However, runoff problems are partly alleviated by the diversion of surface water runoff from above the disturbances by a diversion ditch which funnels water into a natural drainageway.

Problems were also noted with the 4,000-5,000 cubic yards (as estimated by Mr. Fulmer) of topsoil removed from the toe of the talus slide and the canyon. It had been placed in a stockpile on a sloped cut leading to bench #3 and was being driven over by heavy machinery resulting in excessive compaction and possible contamination.

UTAH POWER & LIGHT CO/COTTONWOOD CANYON MINE

COMMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The Utah Power and Light Company's Cottonwood Canyon project encompasses large areas of disturbances with high potential for environmental harm. The extent of the disturbances and the exposing of the 8-9 foot seam and the accompanying wide bench make the project appear more developmental in nature than exploratory. It would seem the knowledge of the previously worked underground mine, along with drilling operations, would be sufficient to adequately explore the site for potential profitable mining operations without jeopardizing the quality of the environment to the degree witnessed during the inspection. The large amount of earth moving observed may be completed as exploratory work under a State issued exploratory permit, when in fact, the intent may be to begin developmental work leading to active underground coal mining.

Regardless of intent, the State has approved the exploratory plan and has issued the permit. OSM does not have jurisdiction over exploratory work under the Initial Regulatory Program. However, due to the questionable exploratory nature of this operation, it is suggested the situation be reviewed in full and a determination made whether OSM does or does not legally have a right to enforce interim regulations in this case.

Jim Smith, State of Utah inspector, in a December 18, 1979 letter to Utah Power and Light Company, addressed the problem of the boulders spoiled into the creek and lack of sediment control for the disturbances. He required the rocks to be removed from the stream.



DENNIS WINTERRINGER
RECLAMATION SPECIALIST