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STATE OF UTAH
NATURAL RESOURCES
Oil, Gas & Mining

015/019#2
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December 15, 1987

TO: Coal File

FROM: Brent A. Stettler, Reclamation Biologist BS

RE: December 17, 1987 Visit to Miller Canyon at the Wilberg/
Cottonwood Mine, Utah Power and Light Company, ACT/015/019,
Folder #2, Emery County, Utah

On December 17, 1987, Larry Dalton of the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Lynn Kunzler and I met with Val Payne of Utah Power and Light Company (UP&L) in Huntington, Utah. The purpose of the meeting was to visit Miller Canyon, which is scheduled for under mining, beginning in mid-January 1988. Seven golden eagle nests and three stick nests are located in Miller Canyon (T17S, R7E, S30). The canyon is nesting territory for a single pair of eagles, and was occupied during the 1986 and 1987 survey years.

Two eagle nests (97A and 97B) are located on the Castlegate escarpment, overlaying the proposed mining area. In addition, one unidentified stick nest is located in close proximity to the set-up entries. If escarpment failure occurred, two eagle nests would be destroyed. The impact to the eagle pair caused by the loss of both nests appears negligible, due to the fact that five alternate nests exist in the canyon. Furthermore, neither of the two potentially impacted eagle nests is known to have been active.

Visual impacts, resulting from spalling would be minimized by the inaccessibility of the canyon and the fact that natural and mine-induced spalling would be virtually indistinguishable.

Miller Canyon is ranked as high priority value winter and summer range for mule deer. Spalling may destroy cover and foraging habitat with talus deposition. Proposed habitat enhancement measures (construction of water guzzlers) may compensate for such a loss.

Page 2
Memo to Coal File
ACT/015/019
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A federally-listed sensitive plant species, Western Sweetvetch (Hedysarum occidentale var. canone) exists in Miller Canyon. Spalling may impact the eastern-most limit of the plant's distribution in the canyon. Because the plant commonly occupies those areas where natural spalling has occurred, no significant impacts to the population or species may be expected.

Utah Power and Light Company has received assurance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that their present permit, authorizing the take of eagle nests in Newberry Canyon may be extended to include Miller Canyon nests. Larry Dalton deferred commitment about a state-issued companion permit, until he had studied Utah Power and Light Company's interim report, entitled "Assessment of Mining-Related Impacts in Newberry Canyon."

djh
cc: J. Whitehead
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