



State of Utah
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF OIL, GAS AND MINING

Michael O. Leavitt
Governor
Kathleen Clarke
Executive Director
Lowell P. Braxton
Division Director

1594 West North Temple, Suite 1210
PO Box 145801
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-5801
801-538-5340
801-359-3940 (Fax)
801-538-7223 (TDD)

April 29, 2002

TO: Internal File

FROM: Susan M. White, Senior Reclamation Specialist/Team Lead *SW*

RE: Tank Seam Access Road and Portal Pad Area, CO-OP Mining, Bear Canyon Mine, C/015/025-AM02B

SUMMARY:

On February 19, 2002, the Division received an amendment to develop the Tank Seam road and portal on Wild Horse Ridge (WHR). The area is located south east of the existing Wild Horse Ridge Blind Canyon Seam pad. An existing road will access the site, a new road branch from the existing road and a pad area will be constructed. In addition, the Permittee proposes to move the current Tank Seam Fan and water tank to the WHR Blind Canyon seam pad and the removal of the WHR Blind Canyon Seam shop.

No changes to the General Contents or legal and financial portion of the MRP were proposed. Chapter 2 of the current approved MRP was review for right of entry information and no changes to the findings made to the initial permitting of the WHR (refer to TA_SR98(1)-5b) are necessary. Many of the findings for land use, vegetation and wildlife made in the initial permitting of the WHR apply to this amendment and are not repeated.

TECHNICAL ANALYSIS:

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE INFORMATION

HISTORIC AND ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCE INFORMATION

Regulatory Reference: 30 CFR 783.12; R645-301-411.

TECHNICAL MEMO

Analysis:

A cultural resource survey of the proposed portal and road area was conducted by Sagebrush Consultants, L.L.C. The site survey was conducted in October 19, 2001 and the National Register of Historic Places was also consulted for listed or determined eligible properties. No cultural resource sites or isolates were identified during this inventory (Appendix 5-C).

Findings:

The information provided meets the minimum Historic and Archeological Resource Information section of the regulations.

VEGETATION RESOURCE INFORMATION

Regulatory Reference: 30 CFR 783.19; R645-301-320.

Analysis:

The addition of the Tank Seam WHR portals and road will increase the disturbed area by 2.54 acres. A mountain brush/conifer reference area was established to represent this disturbance for bond release standards. Prior to disturbance the WHR Tank Seam area had 62 percent total vegetative cover comprised of 25 percent overstory and 37 percent understory cover. Dominant species were Douglas fir, white pine, pinyon pine, curl-leaf mountain mahogany, and Salina wildrye. Woody species density was 1,117 trees or shrubs per acre.

Findings:

The information provided meets the minimum Vegetation Resource Information Requirements of the regulations.

FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCE INFORMATION

Regulatory Reference: 30 CFR 784.21; R645-301-322.

Analysis:

No additional resource information was provided for this permit amendment. Information provided in the initial Wild Horse Ridge permitting is considered adequate, including threatened and endangered plant and animal information. A helicopter survey of raptor nests is scheduled for mid-May 2002. This information is needed prior to start of construction activities.

Findings:

The information provided meets the minimum Fish and Wildlife Resource Information section of the regulations. However, as a standard operating procedure the Permittee will conduct a raptor survey prior to the beginning of construction. If any birds are found at an active nest site construction may be delayed until August.

OPERATION PLAN

FISH AND WILDLIFE INFORMATION

Regulatory Reference: 30 CFR Sec. 784.21, 817.97; R645-301-322, -301-333, -301-342, -301-358.

Analysis:

Because the surface disturbance is in critical winter range, construction should not be started in the winter months from about November 1 until April 15.

Construction should be started outside the nesting season, February 1-August 15, unless monitoring shows the nests are not active. Mitigation for loss of habitat was proposed to be completed by funding a prey base study when the WHR disturbance was permitted. This survey has not been completed.

Findings:

The information provided is not considered adequate to meet the minimum Fish and Wildlife Information requirements of the regulations. Prior to approval, the Permittee must provide the following in accordance with:

R645-301-333, The details of the completion of the prey base study required for mitigation for loss of habitat must be provided.

RECLAMATION PLAN

REVEGETATION

Regulatory Reference: 30 CFR Sec. 785.18, 817.111, 817.113, 817.114, 817.116; R645-301-244, -301-353, -301-354, -301-355, -301-356, -302-280, -302-281, -302-282, -302-283, -302-284.

TECHNICAL MEMO

Analysis:

General requirements

A seed mixture for the Mountain Brush/Conifer vegetation type must be provided in the application. No other changes in the reclamation plan are required and findings are the same as those detailed in the initial WHR permitting.

Standards for success

A new Mountain Brush/Conifer Reference Area was established for the Tank Seam pad and road in the WHR area (Appendix 9-H and Plate 9-1). There are some differences in species composition between the reference area and proposed disturbed area, the reference area is similar enough that it is considered an acceptable standard.

The reference area had 1261 woody plants per acre, and the proposed disturbed area had 1117. Considering the plant communities and the topography, 1000 plants per acre is considered an attainable and acceptable standard for success for woody plant density. In addition to this number standard and in consideration of the value of this area for wildlife the woody plant density and diversity standard should include a commitment that at least half of the woody plants (by number) will be comprised of mountain mahogany, skunkbush, and vasey big sagebrush. A commitment to this standard must be stated in the permit. The standard was established in consultation with the Division of Wildlife Resources.

Findings:

The information provided is not considered adequate to meet the minimum Revegetation requirement of the regulations. Prior to approval, the Permittee must provide the following in accordance with:

R645-301-341, The application must include a seed mixture suitable for the mountain brush/conifer vegetation type.

R645-301-356.231, The application must contain a success standard for woody plant densities as described above.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Division should deny this amendment until the Permittee corrects all of the above-mentioned deficiencies.