

ITEM 2-6

Mining Suitability Determination

Impact of Unsuitability Designations on the Supply of  
Coal and the Economy of Emery County

The economy of Emery County has traditionally had a strong mining base. Mining accounts for 29 percent of the Emery County working population (Utah Department of Employment Security, 1978) and 47.6 percent of the total earnings within the county (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1977). In Emery County, coal accounts for 93 percent of the mining industry (Newman, 1979). Mining experienced a rapid growth in Emery County during the 1970s. As an example, only 364 jobs were tied to the mineral industry in 1970, while in 1978, there were 1,596 such workers (Employment Security, Department of Commerce). There is no question that coal is and will continue to be one of the strongest economic forces in Emery County.

The demand for coal is expected to increase in the future. This conclusion is supported by recent Department of Energy projected coal production estimates for the Uintah-Southwestern Utah Coal Region. In 1976, total production in this region was 10.1 million tons. The Department of Energy has estimated that coal production from this region could vary from 13.9 to 14.5 million tons by 1985 and from 16.9 to 20.6 million tons in 1990. To reach these production levels coal could come from existing leases, preference right lease applications, and new leases.

On June 1, 1979, Secretary of the Interior Andrus determined that an additional 109 million tons of coal should be offered to help meet the identified production targets.

Application of the unsuitability criteria in the San Rafael Planning Area resulted in 14 percent (3,492 acres) of the Emery PCA, containing some 53 million tons of recoverable coal reserves as being classified as unsuitable. This leaves a total of 21,798 acres, with an estimated 333.5 million tons of recoverable Federal coal reserves in the PCA.

None of the coal acreage in the Wasatch Plateau KRCRA (5,515 acres with 80 million tons of recoverable coal reserves) was determined to be unsuitable.

Because of the relative abundance of coal in the area and only 14 percent of the total recoverable reserves in the PCA were included, the unsuitability designations are not anticipated to result in an adverse impact on either the supply of coal or the economy of Emery County.