



State of Utah

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES

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DIVISION OF
OIL GAS & MINING

February 21, 1992

Dr. Dianne R. Nielson, Director
Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining
355 West North Temple
3 Triad Center, Suite 350
Salt Lake City, Utah 84180-1203

Dear Dianne:

The Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR) has reviewed the revisions to Genwal Coal Company's Permit No. ACT/015/032-91-1 with regard to potential subsidence zones. DWR has the following concerns, comments, and recommendations concerning this permit.

The zone of potential subsidence provides habitat for a variety of wildlife including deer, elk, moose, raptors, and a number of nongame species. The drainages in this area also support rainbow and brown trout fisheries. DWR is concerned about the effect of subsidence on wildlife species. Our two main concerns are loss of habitat for species dependent on cliffs or similar topographic features and modification or destruction of critical water sources.

Golden eagles are dependent on cliffs and outcrops as nesting areas. Escarpment failures due to subsidence can destroy nest sites. A raptor survey of Crandall Canyon conducted in May of 1991 revealed three inactive golden eagle nests, one of which was near a portal of the mine. The potential exists for these nests to become active in the future. If this occurs, subsidence could potentially impact these nest sites. DWR recommends that Genwal monitor these nests to determine if they become active. If activity is noted, measures should be taken to prevent damage to the nests. The area contains potential habitat for a number of other raptor species. Monitoring should also determine if active nest sites of these species are established and if potential damage from subsidence could occur.

Subsidence can result in the modification of flows at seeps, springs, perennial streams, and even intermittent channels. Such an impact can have serious consequences on the available water that the area's wildlife use as drinking water. Waters from Crandall and Blind canyons feed Huntington Creek which supports a naturally reproducing brown trout fishery and a stocked rainbow trout fishery. Depletions in flows would represent a significant impact on this fishery. Ultimately, flow reductions result in a decreased

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carrying capacity for terrestrial and aquatic wildlife. Occasionally, subsidence results in increased flows. While this may appear as a benefit, in actuality, it could mean that some other aquatic system has lost flows. DWR supports the philosophy that each and every seep, spring, and stream is a critical resource for wildlife.

Riparian habitats in this area are critical to the moose population found here. This is a developing herd and adequate habitat is a must if it is to sustain itself. Riparian areas also support a high diversity of other wildlife species. Reduction in perennial stream flows will likely cause a degradation of riparian habitat. DWR recognizes riparian areas as critical wildlife habitat and such a loss would be harmful.

Most wildlife species have relatively small home ranges. Loss of habitat, terrestrial or aquatic, due to subsidence results in wildlife being displaced from their home range. This often forces them into areas already occupied by other individuals. This results in mortality due to direct conflict or over-utilization of resources. Loss of habitat will require mitigation.

DWR supports Genwal's intentions (as outlined on page 14-5) to delineate portions of stream reaches within the lease area and to defer operation until it is shown that these reaches will not be adversely affected by mining activity. Monitoring seeps, springs, and streams should continue during operation to assess water flows and determine if depletion is occurring. In the event that subsidence does occur and flows of seeps, springs, or streams are affected, mitigation is anticipated. An impact would be deemed substantial if daily flows were reduced by 50 percent or more. Mitigation would then include measures designed to replace lost water. Such measures could include sealing of cracks or construction of other water sources such as guzzlers. Guzzlers should be designed according to DWR standards which allow passage of wildlife species, but exclude livestock.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this revision. If DWR can be of further assistance or if you have any questions, feel free to contact Ken Phippen, Regional Habitat Manager (637-3310).

Sincerely,


Timothy H. Provan
Director