S/027/012
S/027/014

May 11, 1990

TO: Minerals File

FROM: D. Wayne Hedberg DWH

RE: Field Inspections, State Mineral Fossil Leases, 43395, 26068 and 42750, Rex Harris, West Desert Collection, Ancient Critters, S/027/011, S/027/012, S/027/014, Millard County, Utah

On May 9, 1990, Wayne Hedberg and Tony Gallegos, of the Division inspected these state mineral fossil leases with Mr. Jerry Mansfield from the Division of State Lands and Forestry. We met with Mr. Edwin Cole, Mr. Rex Harris, Mr. Robert Harris, and Mr. Loyd Crapo. The purpose of the field inspection was to confirm site disturbances associated with these trilobite fossil mining operations, which to date had not been visited by any Division personnel. It was also the Division's intention to discuss with the mining operators what the regulatory and reclamation requirements would be for these sites.

West Desert Collections

The first site visited was the West Desert Collections site, the Small Mining notice currently filed by Robert Harris and Loyd Crapo. This particular operation was the largest of the three operations visited and Mr. Harris and Mr. Crapo indicated they would be dividing up the properties into two equal portions and likely filing separate notices, in the very near future. Combined disturbances, presently with no separation between these two operations would likely equal or exceed the 5 acre total disturbance criteria.

The general area has seen quite a historic period of prospecting and mining activity, apparently, going back as far as 1910 when the site was first discovered. Since that time, a series of prospecting pits and associated disturbances created by any number of individuals still exist in this area. Bob Harris has apparently been active on these mineral leases for the longest period. He indicated he had started his prospecting and mining related activities back in the early 1960's.

This area has been very popular and continues to be ever increasingly popular as a rock hounding area with the general public as well as many educational institutions. All of the operators indicated that they have problems with many individuals coming out on site and collecting specimens out of their active pit areas. They actively discourage these individuals from obtaining specimens in the pit areas but do encourage and permit the local public to utilize the rejected rock, waste dump

areas for their own personal collecting areas. The operators indicated that it was not unusual on any given weekend, especially during the spring, summer and fall months, to see as many as 100 - 200 individuals out working the waste dumps during the weekend periods. They also indicated that they have routine visits from local and regional grade schools, elementary schools, high schools, universities, and they have even had one pre-school out on the sites. Bob Harris indicated that in his 30 years of working this area, he has seen a constant increase in the interest and popularity of this area to rock hounding community.

All the operators expressed an interest in the regulatory personnel's knowledge of what impact these recent legislative changes would have on them continuing to be able to operator on these state leases. Mr. Mansfield indicated that it was his opinion that the legislative changes would not prohibit the operators from continuing to operate on these leases; however, the operators would need to obtain the proper permits and continue to file the required reports with that agency, indicating the type and number of fossils collected from the leases.

Mr. Crapo and Mr. Harris each discussed their proposed mine development scheme with the regulatory personnel and the Division expressed their concern that the operators continue to minimize their surface disturbance associated with these projects in order to maintain their small mining category status. We discussed the importance of contemporaneous reclamation and the need to minimize potential hazardous situations to the public health and safety.

The second site inspected was Mr. Edwin Cole's small mining operation which lies immediately adjacent and to the west of Mr. Bob Harris and Mr. Crapo's operations. This operation also consists of a series of small, shallow pits and excavations exposing the fossilized shale and silt stone beds of the Wheeler formation. Series of waste rock dumps are also associated with these excavations. Mr. Cole indicated that approximately half of the disturbance associated with his lease was previously existing disturbance that he had no intention of impacting further, although he did commit to preforming some regrading work on these previously impacted areas as part of some proposed backfilling and regrading work he had scheduled within the next two weeks.

Total surface disturbances associated with this particular operation was estimated in the vicinity of 2 1/2 acres. Mr. Cole indicated he would be submitting an amended application to revise his original Notice of Intent to include some minor expansion on one of the areas that was currently being worked. The extent of highwall area and depth of pits on this particular project, were significantly less extensive than on the projects operated by Mr. Crapo and Mr. Bob Harris.

It was noted during our inspection, that the shale and silt stone outcrops tend to weather quit rapidly by themselves and tend to create a artificially regraded slope over time. All the operators indicated that the heavy rock hounding that occurs in the area also tends to accelerate the break-down and levelizing of these exposed faces into more gently graded slopes.

Mr. Cole indicated that he would not likely be actively working his lease until some time in August of this year.

The third site visited was the site owned and operated by Mr. Rex Harris. Current surface disturbance associated with this operation is approximately 3/4 of an acre. Again, we are looking at a series of small pits, trenches, excavated into the Wheeler formation exposing the fossil bearing shale and silt stone liners. Mr. Harris had Mr. Myer's working a lease from Mr. Harris from March of this year.

Mr. Harris indicated it was his intent to keep his surface disturbance at or near the present size and again contemporaneously reclaim by backfilling into an existing pit as the expanded operations further into the Wheeler formation. He indicated he would also be willing to perform some revegetation work if the state so required. The Division indicated that prior to an operator's expanding beyond the 5 acre limit, that previously reclaimed acreage would have to meet the revegetation standards prior to release.

jb
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