BY BRENT ISRAELSEN

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

With a National Park Service-caused blaze consuming a New Mexico town, Park Service officials in Utah face new restrictions on their plans to set fire to hundreds of acres of park lands this year in the Beehive State.

The Park Service on Thursday ordered that all so-called "prescription fires" must be approved by the regional director.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service, which manage the bulk of the public land in Utah, anticipate no change in their prescription-fire programs on tens of thousands of acres.

Known also as "controlled burns," prescription fires have become a routine component of ecological restoration efforts on rangelands and forests everywhere. The fires are intended to reintroduce the natural phenomenon of fire to areas where humans have suppressed it, and to reduce the buildup of fuels that can cause huge, environmentally damaging wildfires.

The disaster in New Mexico — in which a prescription fire in Bandelier National Monument got out of control and engulfed Los Alamos — is causing no small amount of anxiety among land managers and ecologists who advocate fire as a resource.

While expressing sadness over the loss of people's homes, they worry that public and congressional opinion could turn against fire as a management tool.

See **PARK SERVICE**, Page **A-12**

that our nuclear materials are safe," said Energy Secretary Bill Richardson, a former New Mexico congressman.

Fire crews with hand tools and bulldozers worked feverishly to protect homes by clearing away vegetation and cutting firebreaks ahead of the flames. Helicopters dropped water on the blaze, while airplanes bombarded it with fire retardant.

County Manager Joe King estimated that 100 homes burned. Rep. Tom Udall, whose district includes Los Alamos, said federal officials estimated

See **BLAZE**, Page **A-12**

Kennecott Fumes Over EPA's 'Black List'

BY JIM WOOLF

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

■ Bountiful area designated as a Superfund site **B-1**

Utah now has two dubious honors.

The company atop the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's list of the nation's largest generators of "toxic" pollutants for many years has been Magnesium Corporation of America's facility in Tooele County for the huge quantities of chlorine gas it releases into the air.

MagCorp maintained that top position in the 1998 list issued Thursday, despite a moderate reduction in its emissions from the 1997 levels.

But the EPA this year issued a second list of toxic emissions from several industries that for the first time were required to participate in the survey. These included metal mines, coal mines, electric power plants and hazardous-waste facilities.

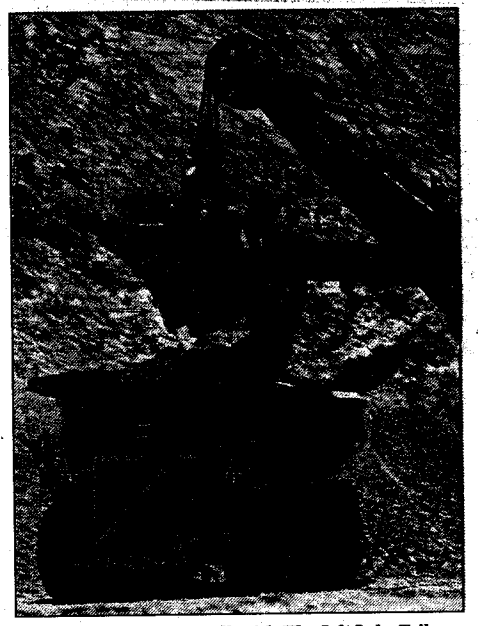
The name atop this new list is Kennecott Utah Copper Corp. for pollutants generated at its Bingham Canyon Mine in the Oquirrh Mountains southwest of Salt Lake City.

"The facilities releasing the largest amount of toxic chemicals into the environment nationwide in both the original and new industry sectors are located in Utah," said a news release distributed by the EPA.

Bill Williams, Kennecott's vice president and general manager of environmental and engineering services, said company officials are concerned the public will misinterpret the new information.

"Taken out of context, the TRI information will give a false impression of the mining industry, the state and the region," he said. "The numbers do not reflect any increased danger to public health or the environment."

See **KENNECOTT**, Page **A-8**



Ryan Galbraith/The Salt Lake Tribune

A giant truck is filled with rock at Kennecott in this file photo. On Thursday, the EPA listed the Utah company among the worst polluters nationwide.

SALT LAKE TRIBUNE
FRI. MAY 12, 20
PAGE A-1

M/035/002

0012

INDEX

Ann Landers	B-9	Comics	B-8
Asimov/Bridge	C-23	Movies	E-2
Astrology	C-22	Obituaries	F-11
Births	B-10, D-7	Puzzles	C-21
Business	D-1	Sports	F-1
Classifieds	C-2	TV Programs	B-9

WEATHER: Highs 50 to 60 north; 60s to mid-70s south. **Details: E-12**

New SLOC Openness: Don't Count on Getting Hot-Events Tickets

BY MIKE GORRELL

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

■ Australians scold Gosper **A-8**
■ Snowbasin deal under fire again **B-1**

Learning from Sydney's mistakes, Salt Lake Organizing Committee officials have decided to get some of the bad news about their ticket program out front right away.

For instance, Utah hockey fans have only a slim chance of seeing the men's finals. Because it occurs on the 2002 Winter Games' last day, when only three events are scheduled, SLOC is obligated contractually to allocate 90 percent of the E

Similarly slim prospects exist for ordinary folks to get into the ever-popular figure-skating finals.

"There's no question, at high-demand events, most of the tickets will go to sponsors," SLOC President Mitt Romney told trustees Wednesday evening, noting that corporate supporters earned first shot at buying these premium tickets with possible.

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With entitled groups — sponsors, the International Olympic Committee, sports federations and national Olympic committees — also seeking about 100,000 more tickets than SLOC originally projected, the pool available for sale to the general public has shrunk from 865,000 to 730,000.

Nevertheless, SLOC chief operating officer Fraser Bullock stressed that

tional Olympic Committee's vice president, denied any influence on the Hellenic Olympic Committee's decision to switch the relay order and promote Sophie Gosper, 11.

But leading politicians, the media, former Olympic champions and the general public were critical of Gosper, the bulk saying he should have graciously declined the Greek offer.

Talk radio and newspaper columns were full of scathing attacks on IOC nepotism

The Sydney Morning Herald reported that the purity of the event had been lost and it was just another case of the "IOC club looking rejects suggestions his position influenced the Greek committee's decision concerning his daughter.

Sydney organizers had been hoping the ceremony would commence a period when public enthusiasm and support for the games would build, but Gosper had "blown away that chance in a flash," the *Herald* opined.

Australian Olympic Committee president John Coates admitted it would be fair to interpret the situation as an example of favors for IOC members.

Coates said Yianna Souleles, 15, had been selected to be first torch bearer.

Bullock said he wanted to lay out every component of the evolving plan, those that will delight and those that will give some Utahns heartburn, to achieve a sense of "complete openness . . . so we don't repeat Sydney's problems."

Australians were outraged when Olympic organizers there were forced to admit they had misled the populace into thinking tickets were available to certain desirable events at September's 2000 Summer Games. But the sessions already were sold out, with a number of tickets advertised as

from ticket sales.

Since they have pledged to provide a "significant number of inexpensive tickets" for youth and others, SLOC leaders feel they must get as much money as possible for seats that people are willing to pay big bucks for. They said again Wednesday that they believe the public will respect that approach if SLOC is honest in expressing its intentions.

No trustees challenged the approach. Anita DeFrantz, one of two American IOC members on the board, called it a "very fair program" as long as Utahns realize

do percent of out-of-towner like to be able to

Kennecott Makes Top of EPA's 'Black List'

■ Continued from A-1

Joyel Dhieux, Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) program coordinator for EPA 's Region 8, said the top ranking on both lists does not necessarily mean Utah has the two dirtiest companies in the nation.

"These are large companies and large companies sometimes have large releases," said Dhieux. The information, she stressed, is just a "starting point" for citizens trying to understand the environmental risk of businesses in their communities.

Kennecott reported the release of some 405 million pounds of toxic substances in 1998.

"Consider the fact that about 500,000 tons of ore and waste rock are removed every day at the Bingham Canyon Mine," said Louie Cononelos, director of government and public affairs for Kennecott. "Contained within each ton of rock are naturally occurring, nonrecoverable, chemical compounds, which include several pounds of copper and about five ounces of zinc, three ounces of lead and two ounces of arsenic. Take these small concentrations and multiply them by Kennecott's daily tonnage of rock mined, and the numbers increase dramatically." Copper, zinc, lead and arsenic are all considered "toxic" chemicals by the EPA.

Pollutants leaking from the huge pile of waste rock in front of Kennecott's mine have contaminated the groundwater in large parts of western Salt Lake County. But the company has spent millions of dollars in the last decade attempting to control the problem and little of this material is believed to be escaping from Kennecott property now.

Brent Bradford, deputy director of the Utah Division of Environmental Quality, said the TRI numbers for Kennecott are just a new way of presenting information that state regulators have known for years. This is one of the reasons state environmental officials spend so much time regulating the company, he said.

"Will the new report cause people to focus more on Kennecott? Yeah, probably. That is what the TRI really does," said Bradford. "Does it mean we ought to take different action? That remains to be seen. We're on the right track. We don't think it will cause us to do anything different. But you don't know what kind of reaction people will have."

MagCorp's total release for 1998 was 57,691,060 pounds of chlorine, a reduction from its 1997 total of 62,335,864 pounds. The company, located in a remote area about 50 miles west of Salt Lake City, extracts magnesium chloride salts from the Great Salt Lake. It then heats the material to separate the magnesium. A byproduct of the operation is chlorine gas.

MagCorp officials have long argued that the gas dissipates rapidly and causes no health or environmental problems. However, environmental activists and officials from the Utah Division of Air Quality have pressured the company to come up with new ways to reduce chlorine emissions.

"They may soon have good news," said Chip Ward, a Tooele County resident and member of Citizens Against Chlorine Contamination. "We have heard they are replacing their old technology with new production cells. What that means, we don't really know. But we have heard there will be really significant chlorine reductions."

MagCorp officials could not be contacted for comment Thursday afternoon.

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