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AGENCY SEEKS PUBLIC COMMENT ON CARBON COUNTY PROJECTS

(Salt Lake City) -- The Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining's Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program is seeking public comment on several projects to be conducted in Carbon County this summer.

The Lower Willow Creek project will stabilize a large coal refuse pile located directly east of the Pacificorp Carbon power plant between US-191 and Willow Creek. A portion of the coal pile will be removed to the Sunnyside co-gen facility to produce energy. The remaining coal will be capped with several feet of clean soil and re-seeded. The project will prevent coal from being washed into Willow Creek and enhance the appearance of the area.

"This stretch of Willow Creek Canyon has seen coal mining for more than a century," said Chris Rohrer, who is managing the project. "A deadly March 8, 1924, explosion at the Castle Gate No. 2 mine that killed 172 miners occurred there, and most recently, the area was home to Plateau Mining Corporation's Willow Creek mine that closed in 2002."

Much of the surrounding area was reclaimed by Plateau after the mine closed. "The Lower Willow Creek project will cost about \$500,000 and will address the last major remaining mining disturbance in the area," added Rohrer.

A number of smaller projects are also planned at abandoned coal mines in the area. Mines were reclaimed in the 1980s and 1990s but several problems have cropped up over the years or were not previously addressed. Mark Wright, an environmental scientist with the division said, "Work will include repairing old mine portal closures that have failed, closing newly discovered mine portals, rebuilding drainage channels damaged by flooding, and burying coal refuse."

The work will be done at about a dozen mines scattered through the Book Cliffs and the canyons east of Helper. Comments may be sent directly to Chris Rohrer at (801) 538-5322 or chrisrohrer@utah.gov.

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