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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FINAL
ENVIRONMENT STATEMENT

PROPOSED
DEVELOPMENT OF COAL RESOURCES
IN
EASTERN POWDER RIVER WYOMING

Prepared by the

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR


Director, Bureau of Land Management
Washington, D. C.

DESCRIPTION OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

exploration and development will increase about 10% by 1990 (personal communication, GS, Conservation Division, Casper 1977).

Uranium. Uranium exploration and mining is confined chiefly to the districts of Pumpkin Buttes in southwest Campbell County and Southern Powder River Basin in northwest Converse County (see Map 10, Appendix A). It is assumed that uranium activity will continue to increase through 1990.

There are presently three producing uranium mining operations (a mining project may involve several open pit, solution, or underground mines, owing to the frequent occurrence of uranium in small diffuse ore bodies) and two mills in the region. It is anticipated that there will be six mining operations by 1980, producing a total of 2,561,000 tons per year (TPY) of uranium ore. In 1985, twelve mining operations will be producing 4,445,000 TPY, while in 1990, the twelve operations will be producing 4,745,000 TPY. Three uranium mills will be operational in 1980 processing 6,200 tons per day (TPD), while in 1985 and 1990, seven mills will be operating, processing 13,200 TPD in 1985 and 16,200 TPD in 1990.

Developments proposed to be operational by 1980 would result in employment of approximately 1,800 workers for uranium mining and milling activities. Uranium employment is projected to reach 2,850 by 1985 and then 3,015 by 1990. It is anticipated that 6,200 total acres will be disturbed by uranium activity by 1980, 15,300 by 1985, and 21,800 by 1990. By 1985, 6,000 acres will be reclaimed, and by 1990, 12,500 acres will be reclaimed. It is anticipated that the majority of development activity will occur in the Southern Powder River Basin (Tennessee Valley Authority 1976; Kern-McGee, July 1977; United Nuclear 1977; Nuclear Regulatory Commission 1977; Bickert et al. 1976; *Engineering and Mining Journal*, December 1975; Wyoming Department of Economic Planning and Development 1978).

Other Construction Activities. Tri-County Electric Association, Inc. plans to construct a 59-mile, 230-kv transmission line from the Wyodak Power Plant east of Gillette to a site on the Campbell-Converse county line. Then, approximately 15 miles of existing transmission line originating from the Dave Johnston Power Plant near Glenrock will be extended north by Pacific Power and Light Company, requiring about 28 miles of new construction to connect with the Tri-County Electric portion. The purpose of the combined 87 miles of new transmission line and associated facilities is to improve the delivery of power for present and anticipated demands of the coal, uranium, and oil and gas industries. Construction may be under way by 1980 (personal communication, Royce Harbicht 1977).

Municipal development in the region is under way, some of which will extend beyond 1980. The community of Wright is expected to increase by an average of 200 housing units per year for 10 years (personal communication, Bob Huff 1977).

Coal Slurry Pipeline

There is a proposal by Energy Transportation Systems, Inc. (ETSI) to construct a 1,667-mile, 38-inch pipeline capable of exporting 25 million tons of coal annually from the region to Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Oklahoma in the form of a coal-water slurry (ETSI 1978). Some of the coal would come from existing mines in the region. ETSI filed an initial application for right-of-way for the slurry pipeline with the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service in 1974. A new application was filed in May 1978 with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and is in the process of being perfected.

Since detailed information about the slurry pipeline is not yet definite, analysis of the cumulative impacts of the proposed pipeline are not included in this ES. After final applications and detailed project data have been filed, the ETSI coal slurry project will be analyzed in a separate environmental analysis. Wyoming BLM has been assigned lead responsibility for preparation of this ES.

THE SITE-SPECIFIC ACTION

The site-specific portion of this ES analyzes the impacts of the specific authorization under consideration by the Department of the Interior. That authorization is approval of the mining and reclamation plan for the Buckskin Mine, after the plan has been modified to meet all applicable federal regulations. No federal right-of-way are required as part of this action. The site-specific action is also included as a part of the probable level of development.

In May 1977, Shell Oil Company submitted the Buckskin mining and reclamation plan, in conformance with federal regulations 30 CFR 211 (May 1976) to the Area Mining Supervisor, GS. The plan outlines a surface coal mining operation on federal lease W-0325878, involving 600 acres (all private surface). The mine would be located approximately 10 miles north of Gillette, Wyoming, and would produce 4 million tons per year by 1990 to supply steam-powered generating facilities in Oklahoma. The mining area of operations or permit area is 1,760 acres, which includes the federal coal lease, a 1,000-foot operational perimeter around the lease, and the access and rail corridors.

Additional information from the Buckskin Mine plan is summarized by the first line entry of Table R1-2.

Required Authorizations for the Site-Specific Action

Assistant Secretary of Energy and Minerals

The Assistant Secretary shall approve the mining permit application (including the mining and reclamation plan) and significant modifications or amendments thereto prior to commencement of mining operations by the company.