

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR MINOR REVISION
COAL AND URANIUM PROGRAM
MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**

COMPANY NAME: Westmoreland Resources Inc.

DATE: 4/23/2010

OPERATING PERMIT#: 85005

MR#: 10-05-02

LOCATION: Absaloka Mine

Type and Purpose of Action: Revise permit language in Exhibit B-35, Water Resources Monitoring Program. Changes make the exhibit more concise and clarify such things as the required response to circumstances that preclude access to monitoring sites, timing for submittal of electronic database updates, moving the approved analytical parameters list to the annual hydrology report, and other minor changes.

Potential Impacts and Mitigation Measures:

No potential impacts are anticipated. The proposed action will not change the monitoring plan, schedule or reporting requirements.

Alternative Actions:

An alternative action would be to leave the language in Exhibit B-35 as is, although no benefit would be realized.

EXHIBIT B-35

WATER RESOURCES MONITORING PROGRAM

The water resources monitoring program for the Absaloka Mine includes measurements of surface and ground water quality and quantity in a monitoring network of wells, springs, and surface water stations. Scheduled monitoring may occasionally be delayed or precluded due to extenuating circumstances following consultation with and approval by the regulatory authority. The approved monitoring plan, current monitoring data and inventories of current and historic monitoring stations are included in the annual hydrology report. Cumulative hydrologic data and monitoring site information are maintained in an electronic hydrology database. Database updates are submitted annually with the annual hydrology report.

Measured parameters are those most diagnostic of potential mining related impacts. The main functions of the monitoring program are to ensure protection of the hydrologic balance during and after mining and to assess whether or not hydrologic bond release requirements are met.

Monitoring is based on the water-year rather than calendar year. Precipitation is measured with a continuous rainfall recorder. Semi-annual data is submitted by May 15 for data collected October 1 to March 30. An annual hydrology report is submitted by December 15 and includes all monitoring data collected throughout the water year. All currently approved and historic monitoring stations are shown on Plate 1 of the annual hydrology report.

SURFACE WATER

Streams

Sarpy Creek, East Fork Sarpy Creek, Middle Fork Sarpy Creek and small tributaries to these streams that may be affected by mining at the Absaloka Mine are monitored for flow and water quality. A summary of active and historic stream monitoring sites is included in the annual hydrology report.

Flow

Stream monitoring takes place quarterly at 11 sites in three main drainages, Sarpy Creek, Middle Fork Sarpy Creek, East Fork Sarpy Creek and three small tributaries in the vicinity of the Absaloka Mine. The location and instrumentation of these stations are listed in the annual hydrology report.

Quality

Streams may be sampled up to three times a year depending on hydrologic conditions; once in the spring high base flow period, once in the fall low base flow period, and once in the spring runoff period. Analysis of collected samples will be conducted for the parameters approved by the regulatory authority and listed in the annual hydrology report.

Sediment Ponds

Sediment ponds/dams are designed to completely contain runoff from the 10-year 24-hour storm and will be dewatered to maintain capacity if necessary. Water levels at all permanent and MSHA criteria (30 CFR 77.216(a)) sediment ponds/darns are monitored quarterly and are monitored semi-annually for ponded water quality. Water quality and flow are also monitored when discharges are covered by Montana Department of Environmental Quality MPDES Permit No: MT-0021229 (Exhibit C-6).

Dry Coulee Dam (G-2, outfall 001), Dam 5 (G-3, outfall 002), Dam 22 (outfall 007), Dam 23 (outfall 008), and Dam 24 (outfall 009) are equipped with discharge gates. Pond 19, Pond 20 (both upgradient of reclaimed Dam 21), Pond 27 (outfall 011), Pond 28 (outfall 012), Pond 29 (outfall 013), Pond 30 (outfall (014), and Pond 31 (outfan 015) are impoundments that can be dewatered only by pumping or siphoning. Water quality and flow will be monitored in accordance with MPDES permit conditions when sediment ponds are dewatered or discharging.

GROUNDWATER

Observation Wells

Many observation wells in and peripheral to the Absaloka Mine have been used at one time or another for monitoring water levels and groundwater quality. A widespread network of wells forms the current monitoring program. These wells, listed in the annual hydrology report, are representative of the major hydro stratigraphic units and would serve as indicators of mining related impacts, should they occur.

An historic well inventory and a summary of well monitoring frequency are listed in the annual hydrology report. Monitoring well drill logs and completion details are compiled in Appendix A of this exhibit.

Water Levels

Static water levels in selected wells are measured quarterly and are reported in the annual hydrology report.

Water Quality

Samples are collected in September from selected wells to monitor groundwater quality. Analytical parameters approved by the regulatory authority are listed in the annual hydrology report.

Groundwater samples will also be analyzed for additional constituents (listed in the annual hydrology report) during baseline data collection and phase IV bond release in consultation with the regulatory authority.

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Springs

Flow and water quality of selected springs in proximity to the Absaloka Mine are evaluated semiannually; in the spring and fall. All springs listed in the annual hydrology report will be inspected and flow measured. If there is no flow, a differentiation will be made between ponded but not flowing, wet or dry. When water is flowing, quality samples will be collected and analyzed to allow comparison to baseline and more recent data. Parameters analyzed for springs are the same as the parameters for wells, since springs are classified as groundwater. An historic spring inventory and a summary of spring monitoring are listed in the annual hydrology report.

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