

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

COMPANY NAME: Spring Creek Coal, LLC

DATE: September 27, 2012

PERMIT#: C1979012

REVISION NO: MR175

LOCATION: Spring Creek Mine

Type and Purpose of Action:

The operator has requested to alter seed mixes used across the mine in an effort to promote shrub establishment and overall diversity. The operator has determined through annual monitoring reports and vegetation monitoring from Phase III sampling that adjustments are needed in their seed mixes. This has primarily been done by reducing cool season grasses and alfalfa which have been inhibiting shrub establishment, increasing shrub components of seed mixes or adding species that promote shrub establishment, changing alternative species to account for varying seed availability, and removing species that have limited commercial availability. The operator has also included language to more accurately apply seed mixes to the substrate materials present. These actions are consistent with ARM 17.24.716 in encouraging prompt reclamation.

Potential Impacts and Mitigation Measures:

Likely results of this revision include improved wildlife habitat diversity and reduced time for meeting Phase III bond release. As the shrub component of seed mixes increases, this should allow for faster and healthier shrub establishment. The operator is required to reach specific goals regarding shrub establishment and this revision should aid in reaching those goals.

Alternative Actions:

The operator could leave the seed mixes as they are and not take into account changing seed availability as well as shrub establishment below their goals. This would likely result in longer timeframes for meeting Phase III bond release and not meeting the desired reclamation goals of both the operator and Department.

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