

MINE SITE INSPECTION NARRATIVE

COMPANY: Colowyo Coal Company L.P.

MINE: Colowyo Mine

PERMIT NO: C-1981-019

DATE OF INSPECTION: September 11-12, 2023

WEATHER: Warm, a mix of sun and clouds.

Company Officials (i.e. operator's representative): Tom Fry

Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety (DRMS) Official: Zach Trujillo

OSMRE Official: Dan MacKinnon (badge #554)

Overview

This complete oversight inspection focused on the parcels under consideration for Phase II bond release, a general overview of the mining permit, required records, the operation's surface disturbance and reclamation, and active mining. No violations resulted from this inspection, nor are any pending.

Records Review

According to the DRMS records checklist, all records were in order, complete, and up to date.

Surface Inspection

Bond Release

This inspection included a Phase II bond release review (a separate, more thorough report is available for formal bond release purposes). We inspected the six parcels under consideration for Phase II bond release described in the operator's SL-22 application. All parcels have previously been granted Phase I release. For the purposes of Phase II bond release, the group did not express any concerns with the reclamation on the approximately 148.4 acres that were inspected. We noted some cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) on these sites; the operator is aware of the populations and has tried a new preemergent herbicide that seems to kill the cheatgrass seeds. OSMRE will follow up with the operator on the formulation of this herbicide as other operators and land managers may have an interest.

Active Mining

Collom Pit. We inspected the active operations of the Collom Pit, where no issues were noted with the mining (Figure 1), overburden removal (Figure 2), and blasting preparation (Figure 3). The sites were well-organized and operating safely at the time of inspection.

Roads

All roads travelled during this inspection were stable and functioning as designed.

Ponds, Ditches, and Topsoil Storage.

Collom Pit

The Sidehill and Section 25 (Figure 4) Ponds were stable, holding water, and fully functional at the time of inspection.

Section 26 Pond was functional at the time of inspection. A portion the upslope embankment is eroding into the pond (Figure 5). The operator discussed repairing this section of the embankment soon in conjunction with removing sediment from the pond.

Topsoil Stockpile 26A was inspected from a distance by walking down the D2 Ditch; no issues were noted with either 26A or D2. At the time of inspection, the operator was still adding to 26A from active mining operations (Figure 6).

South Taylor Pit

The West Taylor Valley Fill and West Taylor Pond were stable and fully functional at the time of inspection (Figure 7).

The Section 28 and 29 Ditches were stable and fully functional at the time of inspection.

South Taylor Reclamation parcel ST001 was inspected. This site was stable at the time of inspection, but some sections still lack significant vegetation (Figure 8). The operator continues to try different methods for establishing vegetation in these spots, including reseeding and loosening overly compacted soil.

Section 28 Pond was stable, dry, and fully functional at the time of inspection.

West Pit

The Buckskin (Figure 9), Taylor, and East Taylor (Figure 10) ditches were stable at the time of inspection. The Taylor and East Taylor ditches were fully functional, whereas the Buckskin ditch construction is still not complete.

The East Taylor Pond was stable, holding a lot of water, and fully functional at the time of inspection (Figure 11). The operator's representative explained that a musk weed infestation was clogging much of the primary spillway and will be manually cleared (no chemical treatments are allowed) as soon as possible.

East Pit

The Prospect Ditch and the associated PD-1 Pond (Figure 12) were stable and fully functional at the time of inspection.

The Streeter ditch and pond were stable and fully functional at the time of inspection. Adjacent to this site is an underground coal seam fire that the Colorado AML program is designing a plan to extinguish (Figure 13).

At the time of inspection, the operator was constructing a ditch and pond in Section 15 to alleviate the water surges that resulted in maintenance and repair to the Prospect Drainage ditches; no issues were noted and the operator plans to complete construction by winter (Figure 14). This construction is part of Technical Revision 154, created in response to a violation the operator received on October 12, 2022, as a result of a high intensity precipitation event that caused damage to the Final East Pit Ditch and transported sediment off-site onto private and lands not permitted for disturbance.

The Final East Pit Ditch (Figure 15) and stock ponds EP1 and EP2 were functional at the time of inspection; EP1 was fully excavated and EP2 was partially excavated and requires further sediment removal. This system was damaged in the October 12, 2022, precipitation event described above. We discussed the additional upgrades to this ditch, including adding gabion baskets to the lowest portion of the ditch to stabilize the channel.

Prospect Pond was stable, holding water, and functional at the time of inspection. Sediment removal was ongoing, and no issues were noted (Figure 16).



Figure 1 - Active mining in the Collom Pit. This site was stable and well organized at the time of inspection.



Figure 2 - Manual overburden removal in Little Collom Gulch. No issues were noted at the time of inspection.



Figure 3 - The operator preparing an overburden blast. Note the blastholes (white arrows).



Figure 4 - Section 25 Pond, stable, holding water, and fully functional at the time of inspection.



Figure 5 - Section 26 Pond, holding water and functional at the time of inspection. Part of the upslope embankment is unstable and slumping into the pond (white oval); the operator will repair this when they remove sediment from the pond.



Figure 6 - Collom Topsoil Storage Pile 26A, stable at the time of inspection. New topsoil can be seen on the ridgeline.



Figure 7 - West Taylor Valley Fill and Pond, both stable and fully functional at the time of inspection.



Figure 8 - South Taylor Reclamation parcel ST001, stable at the time of inspection. The operator is aware of the lack of vegetation in some areas and is actively trying to establish self-sustaining vegetation.



Figure 9 - A section of Buckskin Ditch, stable at the time of inspection. The operator still needs to complete its construction.



Figure 10 - A section of the East Taylor Ditch including an in-channel pond, stable and fully functional at the time of inspection.



Figure 11 - East Taylor Pond, stable and functional at the time of inspection. A musk weed infestation is preventing the primary spillway from adequately discharging the stored water, and the operator will manually remove the infestation as soon as possible.



Figure 12 - Pond PD-1, stable, holding water, and fully functional at the time of inspection.



Figure 13 - The Streeter Ditch (white arrow), stable and fully functional at the time of inspection. An abandoned mine fire is present to the right of the ditch that the Colorado AML program is designing a plan to extinguish.



Figure 14 - The operator was actively installing a new Pond in Section 15. No issues were noted at the time of inspection.



Figure 15 - A section of the Final East Pit Ditch with an associated stock pond. This system was fully functional at the time of inspection.



Figure 16 - Prospect Pond, stable at the time of inspection. The operator was actively excavating sediment to return the pond to full capacity.