

17.24.304 Baseline Information: Environmental Resources

(1) Each application must contain:

(j) Wildlife

Consistent with the requirements of, and guidelines developed by the MDEQ, wildlife surveys, studies and annual monitoring have been completed by Spring Creek Coal LLC. These studies have been conducted within a large area outside the original mine permit boundary and as such are considered adequate to fulfill baseline requirements for wildlife surveys within subsequent permit boundary revisions. The results of these studies are presented in Volume 1 of the EBS, Wildlife and in the annual reports submitted as per Section 17.24.1129. Where possible, population estimates, habitat use, concentration areas (winter, leks, etc.), nest sites and movement patterns have been identified. The surveys, studies and monitoring have been and will be conducted by qualified wildlife professionals (see Volume 1, Appendix C of the EBS for resumes of the biologists involved in the pre-mine wildlife survey).

The results of the pre-mine survey, studies and annual monitoring are used to estimate the potential impacts that proposed mining activities may have on the wildlife communities associated with the mine site. The data are also used to develop mitigation measures and to determine the success of reclamation.

(i) Wildlife Species List

All wildlife observed on the SCM site are listed by species and species group in Volume 1 Appendix 2, Wildlife, of the EBS, and subsequent Annual Wildlife Monitoring Reports. Since 1993, a cumulative species list indicating the species and year it was observed has been maintained.

(ii) Population Density Estimates

Narrative descriptions of the wildlife populations and population densities are included in Volume 1, Appendix C of the EBS, and subsequent Annual Wildlife Monitoring Reports.

(iii) Seasons of Use and Habitat Use

Included in Volume 1, Appendix C of the EBS, and subsequent Annual Wildlife Monitoring Reports are narrative descriptions of seasons of use and habitat preferences.

(iv) Wildlife Habitat Map

Vegetation communities within the mine permit area and surrounding 2 mile buffer zone are found on the Plate 23 (Vegetation Map). Habitat descriptions (including the dominant species comprising each habitat) are contained in Volume 1; Amendment 1 and Appendix C of the EBS. Refer to wildlife maps contained in annual reports for locations of important wildlife habitats (e.g. raptor nest-locations, grouse leks, and prairie dog colonies)

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(v) Wildlife Survey Extent

The extent of the wildlife survey encompasses two overlapping areas. The primary survey area includes the Pits 1, 2 and 3 area plus a 2 mile wide buffer zone surrounding it. This area includes Pit 4. All species are surveyed that occur within this area. A larger study area (the mine permit area plus a 10 mile buffer zone surrounding it) was also surveyed to document bald eagle and golden eagle nest site selection and reproductive success. This larger area was maintained until 1995 when the Wildlife Monitoring Plan was revised. Currently, SCM conducts surveys for nesting raptors within the permit area and accessible portions of the two-mile perimeter