CHAPTER 7

IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES CAUSED BY THE PROPOSED ACTION

Approximately 80 million tons of coal would be extracted and consumed as a result of approval of the proposed action. An additional 2.6 million tons would be left as unrecoverable by present mining methods and lost.

The population and wage increases attributable to Buckskin would contribute to the change in life-style occurring in the region.

Loss of human life due to rail, highway, or mine accidents would be irreversible and irretrievable. The estimated potential fatality rate for coal strip-mining is 1 per 14.3 million tons of coal produced or 5 to 6 lives for the 80 million tons of coal produced.

Destruction of the physical structure of the premining aquifers would be irreversible. Water in aquifers which develop after reclamation would be of poorer quality than in the premining aquifers. This, in turn, may mean poorer surface water quality for some years following mining.

Some premining point-watering sources along Rawhide Creek and Spring Draw would be destroyed; the resulting loss in water source density and dispersion could cause a reduction in wildlife habitat and grazing range.

Existing soil associations on 1,071 acres would be destroyed. Soil loss to erosion or contamination by toxic materials would be irreversible.

Soil and vegetative productivity on 45 acres would be irreversibly lost to new homes, and 6% of the land's premining productive capability would be lost on 1,071 reclaimed acres.

If significant ponding of water on the settled overburden occurs, there would be further irretrievable loss of soil and vegetative productivity and of wildlife habitat on 35 to 40 acres.

There would be an irretrievable loss of vegetative production, approximately 256 animal unit months (AUMs) annually, and total wildlife carrying capacity on 1,071 acres for the life of the mine.

Wildlife which presently occupies the mine site would be displaced and lost, as would subsequent generations of offspring (see Table BU3-13).

Forty-five acres of wildlife habitat would be permanently lost due to construction of new homes.

The aquatic habitat which presently exists on the mine site would not be replaced, but a different community would reestablish itself.

Houses, service facilities, utilities, and roads built on approximately 45 acres to accommodate the increased population would irreversibly commit visual resource Class II, III, and IV areas to Class V.

The land surface on the mine site, which includes cliffs, abrupt breaks, and rolling hills, could not be restored to its original conformation.

Cultural resources in areas of surface disturbance would be committed to either destruction or salvage; in either case, additional information would not be available to future researchers.

The removal by amateurs of collectible minerals, fossils, or cultural resources would be an irreversible loss.