

SECTION 19

ALLUVIAL VALLEY FLOORS

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19. ALLUVIAL VALLEY FLOORS

19.1 Alluvial Valley Floor Assessment

Major stream channels passing through the permit area were examined as part of a study by the New Mexico Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources entitled “Identification of Alluvial Valley Floors in Strippable Coal Areas of New Mexico” (Love et al., 1981). In this report, the San Juan and Chaco river systems (among others) were investigated as part of a phase I study to distinguish “possible alluvial valley floors” from “lands clearly not alluvial valley floors” using guidelines released by OSM. No potential or possible alluvial valley floors were found in the permit area. Chinde Wash and Cottonwood Wash, the two largest drainages crossing the permit area, were specifically examined and found to be “clearly not alluvial valley floors”. Adjacent drainages, including Pinabete Wash and Chaco Wash, were also found not to contain alluvial valley floors. OSM, June 3, 1992, approved NTEC formerly known as BHP’s April 14, 1992 submittal for a negative determination for the two Washes. The only potential alluvial valley floors found near the permit area were along the San Juan River.

Most of the stream channels that pass through the permit area do not have adjacent alluvial deposits. Those few channels that do, such as Chinde Wash and Cottonwood Arroyo, are deeply incised, which acts to drain their adjacent alluvium of any groundwater. Surface flows in all of these streams are infrequent and typically occur only after precipitation events. Those flows that do occur are poor in quality with excessive levels of suspended and dissolved solids. Because of these factors, none of the streams within the permit area are considered to be capable of supporting any agricultural activity and therefore do not warrant any further study as potential alluvial valley floors. This finding is consistent with the conclusions of a phase I alluvial valley floor assessment done by Love et al. (1981) for the State of New Mexico.

References

Love, D.W., J.W. Hawley, and T.C. Hobbs. 1981. Identification of Alluvial Valley Floors in Stripable Coal Areas of New Mexico. NM Energy and Minerals Department, Unnumbered Report. [Permit NM-0003C, Chapter 35, Appendix35-A].