

APPENDIX D-2

HISTORY

History of the Area

The amendment area is located on the extreme western edge of the Powder River Basin in the southern foothills of the Big Horn Mountains. The first documented visit by Euro-Americans to the Powder River region was that of Francis Antoine Larocque in 1805. As an agent for the British North West Company, he rode with the Indians from North Dakota to Wyoming, up the Powder River and Clear Creek, then northwest to the Big Horn and Yellowstone Rivers. He noted many beaver in the Powder River and its tributaries.

Antonio Montero, in 1834, established the first trading post in the area 10 miles east of Kaycee, Wyoming Territory. The post was located on the Powder River and became known as the Portuguese Houses. It was abandoned and completely run down by 1859.

Lieutenant G. K. Warren visited and mapped the region in the 1850's. Pierre Jean DeSmet (Father DeSmet) passed down the eastern side of the Bighorn Mountains in the early 1850's, on his way from Fort Union to the Fort Laramie Council on Horse Creek. Jim Bridger guided Sir George Gores' hunting expedition through the Powder River country in 1855-56. Captain W. F. Reynolds and Lieutenant H. E. Maynadier of the federal government's Yellowstone Expedition, guided by Jim Bridger, led the last major explorations into the area in the late 1850's.

In 1863, John M. Bozeman and John M. Jacobs established the famous Bozeman Trail, over which the first wagon train traveled its entire length in 1864. Many battles were subsequently fought

Black Hills Bentonite, L.L.C.
BLM Plan of Operation Associated with
Permit to Mine No. 339C -North Fork Amendment

September 2011

over white encroachment into the area in the late 1860's and 1870's. Lieutenant Colonel Henry B. Carrington traveled up the Bozeman Trail in 1866 and established Forts Reno, Phil Kearney, and C.F. Smith to protect travelers. However, persistent raids by Indians forced the abandonment of these forts in 1868, and the closure of the Bozeman Trail and Powder River country.

In 1874 gold was discovered in the Black Hills and interest was renewed in travel in the Powder River Basin. All Indians were ordered onto reservations by President Grant, and their failure to comply resulted in the famous battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876. The year 1877 brought an end to Indian hostilities in Wyoming.

Economic Activity

Early on the focus of the economic activity was trapping for beaver and pelts. As the demand for these furs decreased in later years, bison hides and robes saw a brief emphasis. The mid and late 1870's saw the gold rush into the Black Hills and to a lesser extent the Bighorn Mountains. At this time the cattle industry also began to flourish. A primarily economic conflict between large and small ranches during the 1880's and early 1890's became known as the Johnson County War. It culminated with the killing of Nick Ray and Nate Champion at the KC Ranch and the capture of the killers at the TA Ranch south of Buffalo.

Related to the cattle industry was the Hole-in-the-Wall country, located approximately 20 miles west of Kaycee. This area was the hideout for such outlaws as "Flat-nosed" George Curry, Butch Cassidy, the Sundance Kid, Harvey Logan, and Black Jack Ketchum, among others, who rustled cattle and ambushed payroll carriers.

Black Hills Bentonite, L.L.C.
BLM Plan of Operation Associated with
Permit to Mine No. 339C -North Fork Amendment

September 2011

The mining and oil industry is the latest development in the economic activities. Minerals such as coal, uranium, and bentonite, as well as oil and gas exploration, have resulted in an influx of people into the region.