CHAPTER VII

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL SHORT-TERM USES OF MAN'S ENVIRONMENT AND THE MAINTENANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY

Construction of the railroad involves long-term commitment of approximately 2,400 acres of productive land to use for transportation of coal and other materials. Operation of the railroad will result in a long-term impact on the air quality within the study area. By 1990 railroad operations will be increasing the total pollutants in the air (particulates, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons) by two percent on an annual basis over 1970 levels. Increase of these pollutants, particularly sulfur dioxide, has the potential for long-term impacts on vegetation. The exact relationship between sulfur dioxide content of the air and vegetative growth has yet to be established. Research is currently underway to determine what the long-term impact on vegetation may be.

In all practicability, once construction of the railroad is completed, the 2,400 acres will be lost forever to production of wildlife habitat. As a result of the railroad, there will be a long-term reduction in wildlife habitat productivity and in population numbers. Wildlife base populations will be reduced (75 antelope, 20 deer, 35 to 50 sage grouse). Since an unknown amount of sage grouse mating and nesting areas may be destroyed, the total reduction in sage grouse productivity is incalculable.

Long-term rangeland productivity will be reduced annually by 369 animal unit months (AUMs). Noise of operating trains will cause a further long-term reduction in productivity on areas adjacent to the right-of-way for both wildlife and livestock. Increased populations will also have long-term impacts on total productivity of the area.