

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

TEXT TO ACCOMPANY:

COAL RESOURCE OCCURRENCE

AND

COAL DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

MAPS

OF THE

SOUTHWEST QUARTER OF BILL 15' QUADRANGLE,

CONVERSE COUNTY, WYOMING

BY

INTRASEARCH INC.

DENVER, COLORADO

OPEN FILE REPORT 79-466  
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This report is preliminary, and has not been  
edited or reviewed for conformity with  
United States Geological Survey standards or  
stratigraphic nomenclature.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. GEOLOGY	3
III. DATA SOURCES	6
IV. COAL BED OCCURRENCE	8
V. GEOLOGICAL AND ENGINEERING MAPPING PARAMETERS	10
VI. COAL DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL	12
Table 1.--Strippable Coal Reserve Base Data (in short tons) for Federal Coal Lands in the Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle, Converse County, Wyoming.	16
Table 2.--Coal Resource Base and Hypothetical Resource Data (in short tons) for Underground Mining Methods for Federal Coal Lands in the Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle, Converse County, Wyoming.	17
Table 3.--Coal Resource Base and Hypothetical Resource Data (in short tons) for In-Situ Gasi- fication for Federal Coal Lands in the Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle, Converse County, Wyoming.	18
SELECTED REFERENCES	19

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	<u>MAPS</u>	<u>PLATES</u>
1. Coal Data Map		1
2. Boundary and Coal Data Map		2
3. Coal Data Sheet		3
4. Isopach and Mining Ratio Map of Wildcat-Moyer Coal Zone		4
5. Structure Contour Map of Wildcat-Moyer Coal Zone		5
6. Isopach Map of Overburden and Interburden of Wildcat-Moyer Coal Zone		6
7. Areal Distribution of Identified Resources of Wildcat-Moyer Coal Zone		7
8. Identified and Hypothetical Resources of Wildcat-Moyer Coal Zone		8
9. Coal Development Potential for Surface Mining Methods		9

# CONVERSION TABLE

<u>TO CONVERT</u>	<u>MULTIPLY BY</u>	<u>TO OBTAIN</u>
inches	2.54	centimeters (cm)
feet	0.3048	meters (m)
miles	1.609	kilometers (km)
acres	0.40469	hectares (ha)
tons (short)	0.9072	metric tons (t)
cubic yards/ton	0.8428	cubic meters per metric tons
acre feet	0.12335	hectare-meters
Btu/lb	2.326	kilojoules/kilogram (kJ/kg)
Btu/lb	0.55556	kilocalories/kilogram (kcal/kg)
Fahrenheit	$\frac{5}{9}$ (F-32)	Celsius

## I. Introduction

This report and accompanying maps set forth the Coal Resource Occurrence (CRO) and Coal Development Potential (CDP) of coal beds within the Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle, Converse County, Wyoming. This CRO and CDP map series (U. S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 79-466) includes 9 plates. The project is compiled by IntraSearch Inc., 5351 South Roslyn Street, Englewood, Colorado, under KRCRA Eastern Powder River Basin, Wyoming Contract Number 14-08-0001-17180. This contract is part of a program to provide an inventory of unleased federal coal in Known Recoverable Coal Resource Areas (KRCRAs) in the western United States.

The Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle is located in Converse County, in northeastern Wyoming. It encompasses parts of Townships 35 and 36 North, Ranges 71 and 72 West, and covers the area: 43°00' to 43°07'30" north latitude; 105°22'30" to 105°30' west longitude.

The main access to the Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle is provided by the maintained gravel Highland Loop Road. This road traverses east-west across the northern portion of the study area and intersects Wyoming State Highway 59 approximately 6 miles (10 km) to the east. Numerous unimproved roads branch from the gravel road providing access to the remote areas of the quadrangle. Proposed trackage by Burlington Northern is located approximately 7 miles (11 km) east, parallel to Wyoming State Highway 59.

The North Fork and South Fork of Box Creek are located in the center of the Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle and provide northeastward drainage into the Cheyenne River. These intermittent streams drain moderately rugged terrain that attains maximum elevations of approximately 5480

feet (1670 m) above sealevel in the southwest corner of the quadrangle. Highland Flats in the northwest corner of the quadrangle attains elevations of 5440 feet (1658 m) above sealevel. Minimum elevations of 4860 feet (1481 m) above sealevel are located in the valley floor of Box Creek in the northeast quadrant of the quadrangle.

The 10 to 12 inches (25 to 30 cm) of annual precipitation falling in this semi-arid region accrue principally in the springtime. Summer and fall precipitation usually originates from thunderstorms, and infrequent snowfalls of 6 inches (15 cm) or less generally characterize winter precipitation. Although temperatures ranging from less than -25°F (-32°C) to more than 100°F (38°C) have been recorded near Douglas, Wyoming, average wintertime minimums and summertime maximums range from +5° to +°15F (-15° to -9°C) and 75° to 90°F (24° to 32°C), respectively.

Surface ownership is divided among fee, state, and federal categories with the state and federal surface generally leased to ranchers for grazing purposes. Details of surface ownership are available at the Converse County Courthouse in Douglas, Wyoming. Details of mineral ownership on federal lands are available from the U. S. Bureau of Land Management in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Federal coal ownership is shown on Plate 2 of the Coal Resource Occurrence maps. The non-federal coal ownership comprises both fee and state coal resources.

The Coal Resource Occurrence and Coal Development Potential program pertains to unleased federal coal and focuses upon the delineation of lignite, subbituminous coal, bituminous coal, and anthracite at the surface, and in the subsurface. In addition, the program identifies total tons of coal in place, as well as recoverable tons. These coal tonnages are then categorized into units of measured, indicated, and inferred reserves and resources, and hypothetical resources. Finally, re-

commendations are made regarding the potential for surface mining, underground mining, and in-situ gasification of the coal beds. This report evaluates the coal resources of all unleased federal coal beds in the quadrangle which are 5 feet (1.5 m) or greater in thickness and occur at depths down to 3000 feet (914 m). No resources or reserves are computed for leased federal coal, state coal, fee coal, or lands encompassed by coal prospecting permits and preference-right lease applications.

Surface and subsurface geological and engineering extrapolations drawn from the current data base suggest the occurrence of approximately 215 million tons (195 million metric tons) of unleased federal coal resources in the Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle.

The suite of maps that accompany this report sets forth and portrays the coal resource and reserve occurrence in considerable detail. For the most part, this report supplements the cartographically displayed information with minimum verbal duplication of the CRO-CDP map data.

## II. Geology

Regional. The thick, economic coal deposits of the Powder River Basin in northeastern Wyoming occur mostly in the Tongue River Member of the Fort Union Formation, and in the lower part of the Wasatch Formation. Approximately 3000 feet (914 m) of the Fort Union Formation, including the Tongue River, Lebo, and Tullock Members of Paleocene age, are unconformably overlain by approximately 700 feet (213 m) of the Wasatch Formation of Eocene age. These Tertiary formations lie in a structural basin flanked on the east by the Black Hills uplift, on the south by the Hartville and Casper Mountain uplifts, and on the west by the Casper Arch and the Big Horn Mountain uplift. The structural con-

figuration of the Powder River Basin originated in Late Cretaceous time, with episodic uplift thereafter. The Cretaceous Cordillera was the dominant positive land form throughout the Rocky Mountain area at the close of Mesozoic time.

Outcrops of the Wasatch Formation and the Tongue River Member of the Fort Union Formation cover most of the areas of major coal resource occurrence in the Powder River Basin. The Tongue River Member is composed of very fine-grained sandstones, siltstones, claystones, shales, carbonaceous shales, and numerous coal beds. The Lebo Member of the Fort Union Formation consists of light- to dark-gray very fine-grained to conglomeratic sandstone with interbedded siltstone, claystone, carbonaceous shale and thin coal beds. Thin bedded calcareous ironstone concretions interbedded with massive white sandstone and slightly bentonitic shale occur throughout the unit. The Lebo Member is mapped at the surface northeast of Recluse, Wyoming. Here, the Lebo Member is east of the principal coal outcrops and associated clinkers (McKay, 1974), and it presumably projects into the subsurface beneath much of the basin. One of the principal characteristics for separating the Lebo and Tullock Members (collectively referred to as the Ludlow Member east of Miles City, Montana) from the overlying Tongue River Member is the color differential between the lighter-colored upper portion and the somewhat darker lower portion (Brown, 1958). Although geologists are trying to develop criteria for subsurface recognition of the Lebo-Tullock and Tongue River-Lebo contacts through the use of subsurface data from geophysical logs, no definitive guidelines are known to have been published. Hence, for subsurface mapping purposes, the Fort Union Formation is not divided into its members for this study.



During the Paleocene epoch, the Powder River Basin tropical to subtropical depositional environment included broad, inland flood basins with extensive swamps, marshes, freshwater lakes, and a sluggish, but active, northeastward-discharging drainage system. These features were superimposed on an emerging sea floor, near base level. Much of the vast area where organic debris collected was within a reducing depositional environment. Localized uplifts began to disturb the near sea-level terrain of northeastern Wyoming following retreat of the Cretaceous seas. However, the extremely fine-grained characteristics of the Tongue River Member clastics suggest that areas of recurring uplift peripheral to the Powder River Basin were subdued during major coal deposit formation.

The uplift of areas surrounding the Powder River Basin created a structural basin of asymmetric character, with the steep west flank located on the eastern edge of the Big Horn Mountains. The axis of the Powder River Basin is difficult to specifically define, but it is thought to be located in the western part of the Basin and to display a north-south configuration some 15 to 20 miles (24 to 32 km) east of Sheridan, Wyoming. Thus, the sedimentary section described in this report lies on the east flank of the Powder River Basin, with gentle dips of two degrees or less disrupted by surface structure thought to relate to tectonic adjustment and differential compaction.

The Wasatch Formation of Eocene age crops out over most of the central part of the Powder River Basin and exhibits a disconformable contact with the underlying Fort Union Formation. The contact has been placed at various horizons by different workers; however, for the purpose of this report, the contact is positioned near the top of the Roland coal bed as mapped by Olive (1957) in northwestern Campbell

County, Wyoming, and it is considered to descend disconformably in the stratigraphic column to the top of the Wyodak-Anderson coal bed (Roland coal bed of Taff, 1909) along the eastern boundary of the coal measures. No attempt was made to differentiate the Wasatch and Fort Union Formations on geophysical logs or in the subsurface mapping program for this project.

Although Wasatch and Fort Union lithologies are too similar to allow differentiation in some areas, most of the thicker coal beds occur in the Fort Union section on the east flank of the Powder River Basin. Furthermore, orogenic movements peripheral to the basin apparently increased in magnitude during Wasatch time causing the deposition of friable, coarse-grained to gritty, arkosic sandstones, fine- to very fine-grained sandstones, siltstones, mudstones, claystones, brown-to-black carbonaceous shales, and coal beds. These sediments are noticeably to imperceptibly coarser than the underlying Fort Union clastics.

The Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle is located in an area where surface rocks are classified into the Wasatch Formation. Approximately 550 to 600 feet (168 to 183 m) of Wasatch Formation is exposed in the study area. This report utilizes where possible, the coal bed nomenclature used in previous reports. The Wildcat and Moyer coal beds were informally named by IntraSearch Inc. (1978 and 1979).

Local. The Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle lies on the eastern flank of the Powder River Basin, where the strata dip gently westward. The Wasatch Formation crops out over the entire quadrangle.

### III. Data Sources

Publications regarding the areal geology of coal outcrops and associated clinker in the quadrangle are unknown at the time of this publication.

Geophysical logs from oil and gas test bores and producing wells comprise the source of subsurface control. Some geophysical logs are not applicable to this study, for the logs relate only to the deep, potentially productive oil and gas zones. More than 80 percent of the logs include resistivity, conductivity, and self-potential curves. Occasionally the suite of geophysical logs includes gamma, density, and sonic curves. These logs are available from several commercial sources.

All geophysical logs available in the quadrangle are scanned to select those with data applicable to Coal Resource Occurrence mapping. Paper copies of the logs are obtained and interpreted, and coal intervals are annotated. Maximum accuracy of coal bed identification is accomplished where gamma, density, and resistivity curves are available. Coal bed tops and bottoms are picked on the logs at the midpoint between the minimum and maximum curve deflections. The correlation of coal beds within and between quadrangles is achieved utilizing a fence diagram to associate local correlations with regional coal occurrences.

The reliability of correlations, set forth by IntraSearch in this report, varies depending on: the density and quality of lithologic and geophysical logs; the detail, thoroughness, and accuracy of published and unpublished surface geological maps; and interpretative proficiency. There is no intent on the part of IntraSearch to refute nomenclature established in the literature or used locally by workers in the area. IntraSearch's nomenclature focuses upon the suggestion of regional coal bed names applicable throughout the eastern Powder River Basin. It is expected, and entirely reasonable, that some differences of opinion regarding correlations, as suggested by IntraSearch, exist. Additional drilling for coal, oil, gas, water, and uranium, coupled with expanded mapping of coal bed outcrops and associated clinkers will

broaden the data base for coal bed correlations and allow continued improvement in the understanding of coal bed occurrences in the eastern Powder River Basin.

The topographic map of the Bill 15' Quadrangle is published by the U. S. Geological Survey, compilation date 1959. Land network and mineral ownership data are compiled from land plats available from the U. S. Bureau of Land Management in Cheyenne, Wyoming. This information is current to October 13, 1977.

IV. Coal Bed Occurrence

Fort Union Formation coal beds that are present in all or part of the Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle include, in descending stratigraphic order, two local coal beds, the Wildcat, a local coal bed, the Moyer and two local coal beds. A complete suite of maps (structure, coal isopach, mining ratio, overburden/interburden isopach, areal distribution of identified resources and identified resources) is prepared for the Wildcat-Moyer coal zone. Insufficient data and areal extent preclude detailed mapping of the local coal bed above the Wildcat coal bed and the local coal beds below the Moyer coal bed. The local coal bed located within the Wildcat-Moyer coal zone is included with the coal zone.

No physical and chemical analyses are known to have been published regarding the coal beds in the Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle. However, an "as received" basis proximate analysis for the "Wildcat" coal bed in the southern Powder River Basin is as follows:

COAL BED NAME	ASH %	FIXED CARBON %	MOISTURE %	VOLATILES %	SULFUR %	BTU/LB
(Wildcat) (*)	4.3	29.4	27.8	29.4	0.27	8410

(\*) - Winchester (1912)

The Coal Data Sheet, Plate 3, shows the downhole identification of coal beds within the quadrangle as interpreted from geophysical logs from oil and gas test bores and producing sites. A datum coal bed is utilized to position columnar sections on Plate 3. This portrayal is schematic by design; hence, no structural or coal thickness implications are suggested by the dashed correlation lines projected through no record (NR) intervals. Inasmuch as the Moyer coal bed underlies the largest areal extent of the quadrangle, it is designated as datum for the correlation diagram.

The Wildcat-Moyer coal zone is present throughout the quadrangle except for approximately 2 percent located in the extreme southeast corner. The combined coal zone varies in thickness from 0 to 13 feet (0 to 4 m) (Plate 4). Maximum thicknesses occur in the central and north-central parts of the quadrangle. The Wildcat coal bed thickness varies from 0 to 8 feet (0 to 2.4 m) and is present in the northern and northeastern portions of the quadrangle. A 3 foot (0.9 m) thick local coal bed is present between the Wildcat and Moyer coal beds in sections 10 and 35, Township 36 North, Range 72 West and it is included in the Wildcat-Moyer coal zone isopach. The Moyer varies in thickness from zero in the southeast corner to 8 feet (2.4 m) in the north-central portion of the quadrangle. The structure contour map (Plate 5) is drawn on the top of the Wildcat coal bed, where it is present, and on the top of the Moyer coal bed where the Wildcat coal bed is absent. Subsurface data define a gentle west dip. A broad anticlinal feature mapped on the top of the Moyer coal bed, plunges to the west-northwest, in the southern part of the quadrangle. A syncline is located to the north of this anticline. The Wildcat coal bed is 371 to 1153 feet (113 to 351 m) beneath the surface and is separated from the underlying Moyer coal bed by 237 to 267 feet (72 to 81 m) of clastic rocks. The Wildcat-Moyer coal zone lies greater than 500 feet (152 m) deep over approximately 90 percent of the Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle (Plate 6).

V. Geological and Engineering Mapping Parameters

The correct horizontal location and elevation of drill holes utilized in subsurface mapping are critical to map accuracy. IntraSearch Inc., plots the horizontal location of the drill hole as described on the geophysical log heading. Occasionally this location is superimposed on or near to a drillsite shown on the topographic map, and the topographic map, horizontal location is utilized. If the ground elevation on the geophysical log does not agree with the topographic elevation of the drillsite, the geophysical log ground elevation is adjusted to conformance. If there is no indication of a drillsite on the topographic map, the "quarter, quarter, quarter" heading location is shifted within a small area until the ground elevation on the heading agrees with the topographic map elevation. If no elevation agreement can be reached, the well heading or data sheet is rechecked for footage measurements and ground elevation accuracy. Inquiries to the companies who provided the oil and gas geophysical logs frequently reveal that corrections have been made in the original survey. If all horizontal location data sources have been checked and the information accepted as the best available data, the drillsite elevation on the geophysical log is modified to agree with the topographic map elevation. IntraSearch Inc., considers this agreement mandatory for the proper construction of most subsurface maps, but in particular, the overburden isopach, the mining ratio, and Coal Development Potential maps.

Subsurface mapping is based on geologic data within, and adjacent, to the Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle area. Data from geophysical logs are used to correlate coal beds and control contour lines for the coal thickness, structure, and overburden maps. Isopach lines are also drawn to honor selected surface measured sections where

there is sparse subsurface control. Where isopach contours do not honor surface measured sections, the surface thicknesses are thought to be attenuated by oxidation and/or erosion; hence they are not reflective of total coal thickness. Isopach lines extend to the coal bed outcrops, the projections of coal bed outcrops, and the contact between porcellanite (clinker) and unoxidized coal in place. Attenuation of total coal bed thickness is known to take place near these lines of definition; however, the overestimation of coal bed tonnages that results from this projection of total coal thickness is insignificant to the Coal Development Potential maps. Structure contour maps are constructed on the tops of the main coal beds. Where subsurface data are scarce, supplemental structural control points are selected from the topographic map along coal outcrops.

In preparing overburden isopach maps, no attempt is made to identify coal beds that occur in the overburden to a particular coal bed under study. Mining ratio maps for this quadrangle are constructed utilizing a 95 percent recovery factor. Contours of these maps identify the ratio of cubic yards of overburden to tons of recoverable coal. Where ratio control points are sparse, interpolated points are computed at the intersections of coal bed and overburden isopach contours using coal structure, coal isopach, and topographic control. On the Areal Distribution of Identified Resources Map (ADIR), coal bed reserves are not calculated where the coal is less than 5 feet (1.5 m) thick, where the coal occurs at a depth greater than 500 feet (152 m), where non-federal coal exists, or where federal coal leases, preference-right lease applications, and coal prospecting permits exist.

Coal tonnage calculations involve the planimetering of areas of measured, indicated, inferred reserves and resources, and hypothetical resources to determine their areal extent in acres. An Insufficient Data Line is drawn to delineate areas where surface and subsurface data are too sparse for CRO map construction. Various categories of resources are calculated in the unmapped areas by utilizing coal bed thicknesses mapped in the geologically controlled area adjacent to the insufficient data line. Acres are multiplied by the average coal bed thickness and 1750, or 1770--the number of tons of lignite A or sub-bituminous C coal per acre-foot, respectively (12,874 or 13,018 metric tons per hectare-meter, respectively), to determine total tons in place. Recoverable tonnage is calculated at 95 percent of the total tons in place. Where tonnages are computed for the CRO-CDP map series, resources and reserves are expressed in millions of tons. Frequently the planimetering of coal resources on a sectionized basis involves complexly curvilinear lines (coal bed outcrop and 500-foot stripping limit designations) in relationship with linear section boundaries and circular resource category boundaries. Where these relationships occur, generalizations of complexly curvilinear lines are discretely utilized, and resources and/or reserves are calculated within an estimated 2 to 3 percent, plus or minus, accuracy.

VI. Coal Development Potential

Strippable Coal Development Potential. Areas where coal beds are 5 feet (1.5 m) or more in thickness and are overlain by 500 feet (152 m) or less of overburden are considered to have potential for surface mining and are assigned a high, moderate, or low development potential based on the mining ratio (cubic yards of overburden per ton of recoverable coal). The formula used to calculate mining ratios for subbituminous coal is as follows:



$$MR = \frac{to (0.911)*}{tc (rf)}$$

where MR = mining ratio  
to = thickness of overburden  
tc = thickness of coal  
rf = recovery factor  
0.911\* = conversion factor (cu. yds./ton)

\*A conversion factor of 0.922 is used for lignite.

A surface mining development potential map (Plate 9) was prepared utilizing the following mining ratio criteria for coal beds 5 to 40 feet (1.5 to 12 m) thick:

1. Low development potential = 15:1 and greater ratio.
2. Moderate development potential = 10:1 to 15:1 ratio.
3. High development potential = 0 to 10:1 ratio.

The following mining ratio criteria are utilized for coal beds greater than 40 feet (12 m) thick:

1. Low development potential = 7:1 and greater ratio.
2. Moderate development potential = 5:1 to 7:1 ratio.
3. High development potential = 0 to 5:1 ratio.

The surface mining development potential is low for the entire Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle, where the coal is less than 500 feet (152 m) deep. Ninety percent of the Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle is either non-federal land or has no surface mining potential because the coal is deeper than 500 feet (152 m). The low surface mining development potential occurs in the valley of Box Creek in the east-central portion of the quadrangle, where the coal is between 10 and 14 feet (3 to 4 m) thick, the overburden is between 360 and 500 feet (110 to 152 m) thick and the interburden is between 250 and 260 feet (76 and 79 m) thick, thereby causing a greater than 15:1 mining ratio. Table 1 sets forth the estimated strippable reserve base tonnages per coal bed for the quadrangle.

Underground Mining Coal Development Potential. Subsurface coal mining potential throughout the Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle is considered low. Inasmuch as recovery factors have not been established for the underground development of coal beds in this quadrangle, reserves are not calculated for coal beds that occur more than 500 feet (152 m) beneath the surface. Table 2 sets forth the estimated coal resources in tons per coal bed.

In-Situ Gasification Coal Development Potential. The evaluation of subsurface coal deposits for in-situ gasification potential relates to the occurrence of coal beds more than 5 feet (1.5 m) thick buried from 500 to 3000 feet (152 to 914 m) beneath the surface. This categorization is as follows:

1. Low development potential relates to: 1) a total coal section less than 100 feet (30 m) thick that lies 1000 feet (305 m) to 3000 feet (914 m) beneath the surface, or 2) a coal bed or coal zone 5 feet (1.5 m) or more in thickness which lies 500 feet (152 m) to 1000 feet (305 m) beneath the surface.
2. Moderate development potential is assigned to a total coal section from 100 to 200 feet (30 to 61 m) thick, and buried from 1000 to 3000 feet (305 to 914 m) beneath the surface.
3. High development potential involves 200 feet (61 m) or more of total coal thickness buried from 1000 to 3000 feet (305 to 914 m).

The coal development potential for in-situ gasification within the Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle is low, hence no CDP map is generated for this map series. The coal resource tonnage for in-situ gasification with low development potential totals approximately 191 mil-

lion tons (173 million metric tons) (Table 3). None of the coal beds in the Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle qualify for a moderate or high development potential rating.

Table 1.--Strippable Coal Reserve Base Data (in short tons) for Federal Coal Lands in the Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle, Converse County, Wyoming.

Development potentials are based on mining ratios (cubic yards of overburden/ton of recoverable coal).

Coal Bed	High Development Potential (0-10:1 Mining Ratio)	Moderate Development Potential (10:1-15:1 Mining Ratio)	Low Development Potential ( $>15:1$ Mining Ratio)	Total
<u>RESERVE BASE</u>				
Wildcat-Moyer	-----	-----	22,630,000	22,630,000
TOTAL				
	-----	-----	22,630,000	22,630,000

Table 2.--Coal Resource Base and Hypothetical Resource Data (in short tons)  
for Underground Mining Methods for Federal Coal Lands in the South-  
west Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle, Converse County, Wyoming.

Coal Bed Name	High Development Potential	Moderate Development Potential	Low Development Potential	Total
<u>RESERVE BASE</u>				
Wildcat-Moyer	-----	-----	189,530,000	189,530,000
<u>HYPOTHETICAL RESOURCE</u>				
Wildcat-Moyer	-----	-----	1,770,000	1,770,000
TOTAL	-----	-----	191,300,000	191,300,000

Table 3.--Coal Resource Base and Hypothetical Resource Data (in short tons) for In-Situ Gasification for Federal Coal Lands in the Southwest Quarter of Bill 15' Quadrangle, Converse County, Wyoming.

Coal Bed Name	High Development Potential	Moderate Development Potential	Low Development Potential	Total
Wildcat-Moyer	-----	-----	189,530,000	189,530,000
<u>HYPOTHETICAL RESOURCE</u>				
Wildcat-Moyer	-----	-----	1,770,000	1,770,000
TOTAL	-----	-----	191,300,000	191,300,000

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