

CONSOL, UDOGM and OSM Monitor Burrowing Owl Nests



ACTION:

Underground coal mining at the Emery Mine in south-central Utah has been planned in area where the ground surface supports a white-tailed prairie dog colony. Burrowing owls, a sensitive species in Utah, often use abandoned prairie dog holes for nesting. A burrowing owl was observed in the area during one of the field surveys funded by Consol Energy. Consequently, representatives from Consol and Mt. Nebo Scientific, Inc. have developed a Burrowing Owl Protection and Enhancement Plan for adjacent areas of the mine. Part of the plan entailed creating artificial burrows and nests for the owls and to monitor them for occupancy along with the impacts that subsidence may have on both natural and artificial burrows.

Biologists and engineers from the Emery Mine, Utah Division of Oil, Gas & Mining (UDOGM), and the Office of Surface Mining (OSM) have employed OSM's GeoVISION borehole camera, a camera used more for water and oil wells, to record underground activities in all artificial burrows as well as a representative number of natural burrows in the study area.

RESULTS:

Although the study is ongoing, and the impact of future subsidence is not yet known, the artificial burrows have been monitored with the borehole camera. Prairie dog activities have also been monitored during the field studies – a couple of them have been using the artificial burrows. However, we are anxiously awaiting the arrival of the migratory owls in the early spring when they conduct their mating and nesting activities.

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