

The Trapper Mine

The Trapper Mine is a surface coal mine located southwest of Craig, Colorado. With an annual production of nearly two million tons, it is a major Colorado coal producer. The name “Trapper” reflects the local history – fur trapping was at one time an important livelihood in the area – and, in fact, the logo depicts a fur trapper. The mine’s pits are named for firearms – Ashmore, Browning, Colt, Derringer, Enfield, Flintlock, Gatling, Hawken, and Ithaca – and the names of the three draglines honor three famous women of the old west: Queen Anne, Molly Brown, and Baby Doe. The coal from the Trapper Mine is dedicated to the adjacent Craig Station, operated by Tri-State G&T.

The Role of Coal Mines

The United States has about one-fourth of the world’s known recoverable coal reserves. For many years, the U.S. has alternately courted and denounced the use of coal as we struggled to mine and burn it economically, safely, and in an environmentally acceptable way. Technological advancements over the past twenty years have made great strides in overcoming these obstacles.

Often the connection between the mining of coal and the availability of electrical power is not fully recognized. Consumers rarely see the coal itself, only the results of the electricity produced. It is often not realized that coal-fired steam generation plants produce about 90% of the electricity generated in Colorado.

While coal mining may bring to mind the image of a dirty, dangerous, and even destructive operation, the modern coal mine is in reality very clean and very safe. In 1993, Trapper won the coveted *Sentinels of Safety Award*, sponsored by the United States Department of Labor. Further, Trapper’s safety record is one of the best in the nation.

History of Trapper

The development of the Trapper Mine took many years, beginning in 1954 with exploration drilling, acquisition of coal leases and water rights, and obtaining the wide range of permits required by various government agencies. The project combines four federal, two state, one county, and two private coal leases into one contiguous unit.

In 1973, Utah International, Trapper’s original owner, secured a 35-year sales contract with the owner of the Craig Station. The mine was sold in 1983, and the current stockholders are Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Salt River Project Agricultural Improvement and Power District, Platte River Power Authority, and PacifiCorp.

Facts About the Trapper Mine

Daily Production – 9,800 tons
Annual Production – 1,900,000 tons
Employees – 145-170
Annual Payroll & Benefits - \$10,210,000
Monthly Electricity Cost - \$109,000
Mine Area – 12 square miles