ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: RV Ranch **Proposed Implementation Date:** Summer 1996
Proponent: Jim Gilman Excavating, Inc.
Type and Purpose of Action: The proponent proposes to mine, crush, stockpile, and transport 25,000 cu. yds. of sand and gravel from a 5.0 acre site for overlaying with asphalt U.S. Highway 12: reclaim the site by recontouring, respread the topsoil, and reseeding the site with grasses. An asphalt plant will be set up at the site.
Location: SW¼, Sec. 35, T10N, R5W **County:** Lewis & Clark

N = Not present or No Impact will occur.
Y = Impacts may occur (explain under Potential Impacts).

IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
RESOURCE	**[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**
1. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compactible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?	**[N]** The proposed operation is located within the Ten Mile Creek alluvial valley. The gravels were deposited during the Pleistocene to Recent Era. The site has been mined extensively in the past with reclamation having been performed on the site. The proponent will extend the pit to the east. The stockpile and facility areas will be located further to the east. The soil on the east pit slope is a sandy silty loam texture approximately 6 inches deep which was imported onto the site when it was reclaimed. The native soil to the east is a very cobbly sandy loam texture approximately 6 inches deep. All available soil materials will be salvaged, stockpiled, and respread on the site upon completion of regrading. Soil microbes will recolonize the soils. There is no overburden to be salvaged.
2. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?	**[N]** The proposed site is located approximately 200 feet south of Ten Mile Creek. The existing pit's depth varies from approximately 15' on the west end to 20+' on the east end. The eastern portion currently has water in it to a depth of within 10' below ground surface. The water in the pond fluctuates considerably due to irrigation in the surrounding area. During times when the surrounding area is not being irrigated the pond water elevation is approximately 15 feet below ground surface. The proposed operation will be mined to a depth of 8 feet therefore there will be no impact to the pond. There are no water wells within 1000', but the City of Helena's main water line is to the south of the proposed operation. The water line will not be impacted by the proposed operation. Any bulk fuel storage tanks would be lined and bermed and be of sufficient size to contain any leaks or spills. The proponent will not need to obtain a Stormwater Discharge Permit from the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality Water Quality Bureau, but will implement best management practices to prevent any off site erosion or sedimentation.
3. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	**[Y]** Air quality will be degraded, but the proponent must comply with air quality standards and an Air Quality Permit obtained from the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality Air Quality Bureau.

4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	**[N]** The vegetation on the site consists of needle and thread, fescue, various wheatgrasses, cheatgrass, knapweed, and dalmation toadflax. The site will be reseeded with native species. A literature search was done by the Montana Natural Heritage Program and no rare plants or cover types were identified and none were identified during a ground search.
5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	**[N]** The site is utilized to some extent by deer, rodents, and various species of land birds.
6. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Species of special concern?	**[N]** A ground and literature search were conducted and no threatened or endangered species or identified habitat were found on the site. No wetlands were present.
7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	**[N]** A ground survey and literature search were done in the past and no cultural resources were found. Archaeological and historical values will be given appropriate protection. Should a significant archaeological or historical value be found, the operation will be routed around the site of discovery for a reasonable time until salvage can be made. The State Historic Preservation Office will be promptly notified.
8. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?	**[N]**
9. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?	**[N]**
10. IMPACTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?	**[N]**

IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION	
RESOURCE	**POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**
11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	**[Y]** There will be increased hazards because of the equipment activity and hauling of the sand and gravel. The applicant must comply with OSHA and MSHA regulations however, proper precautions will be taken to avoid accidents.

12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	**[Y]** Until such time as the site is reclaimed approximately 5 acres will be taken out of grazing.
13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	**[N]**
14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	**[N]**
15. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?	**[N]** The site will require periodic site evaluations, but these will be done in conjunction with other operations in the area
16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	**[N]** County zoning clearance has been obtained.
17. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?	**[N]**
18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	**[N]**
19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	**[N]**
20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	**[N]**
21. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	**[N]**

22. Alternatives Considered: No action: pit would not be permitted and impacts would not occur at this location. Sand and gravel would be hauled from a greater distance increasing fuel use, gaseous emissions and project costs.

23. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted: State Historic Preservation Office, Montana Heritage Program, Lewis & Clark County Commissioners and Weed Management Board.

24. Other Governmental Agencies with Jurisdiction, List of Permits Needed: Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality for Air Quality Permit; Mine Safety and Health Administration for safety permit; Montana Labor and Industry, Bureau of Safety for safety permit.

25. Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts: Impacts are unlikely to be significant because of the small amount of disturbance, short duration of the project, and mitigated measures proposed.

Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis:

[ ] EIS [ ] More Detailed EA [X] No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Prepared By: Jerry Burke Title: Mine Reclamation Specialist

Approved By: Steve Welch Title: Opencut Mining Bureau Chief

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Signature Date