

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Knaub Gravel Site Proposed Implementation Date: Ongoing
 Proponent: Yellowstone County Public Works, Rm 312, 217 N 27th, Billings MT 59107

Type and Purpose of Action: The operator has applied for a 10.3-acre contract replacement for the current 12-acre contract site. The operator will remove all available soil material, remove the mineral, grade the site, replace the soil material, and seed a cover of introduced grasses. The estimated date for final reclamation is unknown.

Location and County: About 1 mile east of Laurel in the NENE10, T2N, R24E, Yellowstone County

N = Not present or insignificant impact.
 Y = An impact may occur (explain).

IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
1. LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY, AND GEOLOGIC AND EDAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS, SUITABILITY, AND STABILITY: Are there unusual geologic features? Are fragile, compactible, or unstable soils present? Is the proposed soil material handling adequate? Are there exceptional mining and reclamation considerations?	N - The site is located off the southwest corner of the Ridge and Yard Office Road intersection. It's on the edge of a flat bench above the Yellowstone Valley floor. The site is in the sedimentary plains portion of the state. No unusual geologic features were noticed during a site visit. The soil is about 1 foot thick over gravel. The county is committed to salvaging and replacing all soil material. There are no exceptional mining and reclamation considerations.
2. WATER RESOURCE LOCATION, QUANTITY, QUALITY, AND PROTECTION: Are groundwater or surface water resources present? Is there the potential for degradation of water quality or quantity? Could water wells be affected? Are there exceptional mining and reclamation considerations?	N - It does not appear that there are groundwater or surface water resources or wells in the immediate area that could be affected by this project. This site has been open for many years, even before enactment of the Opencut Mining Act in 1973. There is groundwater in the area and the operator is committed to reclaiming the site so that the surface is 3 feet above the highest seasonal water level. There are no exceptional mining and reclamation considerations.
3. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Do air quality regulations apply?	N - Pollutants and particulates will be produced on a temporary basis by mining and reclamation activities. Operators are required to comply with state air quality regulations.

<p>4. PRESENT LAND USE, VEGETATIVE COMPOSITION AND COVER, AND PROPOSED POSTMINING LAND USE: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or vegetative communities present? Are there exceptional mining and reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>N - The present land use is primarily gravel mining. The proposed postmining land use is introduced grassland.</p> <p>No rare plants or rare vegetative communities were observed during a site visit.</p> <p>If the Montana Natural Heritage Program report indicates such resources in the area, the Department will take necessary steps to ensure protection.</p> <p>The Department will notify the county weed control board about the operation. The operator has committed to controlling any on-site noxious weeds.</p> <p>There are no exceptional mining and reclamation considerations.</p>
<p>5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN, AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by common or rare mammals, birds, fish, or other animal species?</p>	<p>N - No common species or evidence of their use of the area were observed during a site visit.</p> <p>No rare species or evidence of their use of the area were observed during the same visit.</p> <p>If the Montana Natural Heritage Program report indicates such resources in the area, the Department will take necessary steps to ensure protection.</p>
<p>6. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE, OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Species of special concern? Riparian areas? Wetlands?</p>	<p>N - The author is not aware of any unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources within or around the site.</p> <p>If the Montana Natural Heritage Program report indicates such resources in the area, the Department will take necessary steps to ensure protection.</p>
<p>7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Has the site been surveyed by a cultural resource professional or paraprofessional? Are any historical or archaeological resources present?</p>	<p>N - A site check revealed no archaeological or historical resources. If such resources are found, the operator has committed to routing the operation around the site of discovery for a reasonable time until salvage can be made, and to promptly notifying the State Historic Preservation Office.</p>
<p>8. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? What facilities will be on site? Will there be excessive noise or light?</p>	<p>N - The site is in a rural farming/ranching/suburban area. It is not visible from populated or scenic areas. There will not be excessive noise or light.</p>

<p>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 or be affected by the project?</p>	<p>N - There will not be a significant demand or impact on environmental resources or other projects as a result of this operation.</p>
<p>10. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS OR IMPACTS: Are there other studies, plans, or projects on this tract? Will waste disposal be properly handled? Is reclamation guaranteed by a bond?</p>	<p>N - The author is not aware of any other environmental aspects or impacts. The operator has committed to proper waste disposal. Government entities are not required to post bond, but they are required by law to meet the performance standards in their Mined Land Reclamation Contract.</p>

IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
<p>11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?</p>	<p>N - The site is in a rural farming/ranching suburban area. The project should not add to the health and safety risks in the area if the operator and landowner manage the site in a responsible manner. The operator is required to comply with OSHA and MSHA regulations.</p>
<p>12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL, AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?</p>	<p>N - Industrial, commercial, or agricultural activities in the area will not be significantly affected by the project.</p>
<p>13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move, or eliminate jobs?</p>	<p>N - The quantity or distribution of employment in the area will not be significantly affected by the project.</p>
<p>14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?</p>	<p>N - Local and state tax revenues have not been significantly affected by similar operations in the state.</p>
<p>15. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial changes in road use occur? Will other facilities and services (e.g., fire protection, police, schools) be affected or needed?</p>	<p>N - Haul trucks will use the county road to haul gravel to the project. No other government services should be affected or needed.</p>
<p>16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there federal, state, county, city, tribal, and/or private zoning or management plans in effect?</p>	<p>N - The author is not aware of any other environmental plans or goals. The local zoning authority has been contacted and clearance obtained.</p>
<p>17. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are recreational or wilderness areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?</p>	<p>N - Access to and quality of recreational lands and activities on site and in the area will not be affected by the project.</p>

18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the area's population and require additional housing?	N - The density and distribution of population or housing in the area will not be significantly affected by the project.
19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	N - The local social structure or mores will not be significantly affected by the project.
20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	N - The local cultural uniqueness or diversity will not be significantly affected by the project.
21. OTHER SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	N - The author is not aware of other significant social or economic circumstances.

22. Alternatives Considered: Denial. The owner of the gravel resource would be denied full utilization of his property at this time.

23. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted: Montana Natural Heritage Program, county weed control board, State Historic Preservation Office, and local zoning authority.

24. Other Governmental Agencies with Jurisdiction, List of Permits (that may be) Needed: Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Air Quality Division for Air Quality Permit and Water Quality Division for Stormwater Discharge Permit; United States Department of Labor, Mine Safety and Health Administration for safety permit; Montana Department of Labor & Industry, Safety Bureau for safety permit.

25. Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts: Negative impacts during mining should be insignificant and implementation of the mining and reclamation plan should return this area to an aesthetically pleasing and useful condition.

26. Regulatory Impact on Private Property: The analysis conducted in response to the Private Property Assessment Act indicates no impact. The Department does not plan to deny the application nor impose a condition that restricts the use of private property.

Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis:

EIS More Detailed EA No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Prepared By: Mark Carlstrom Mine Reclamation Specialist
Name Title

Approved By: Steve Welch Opencut Mining Bureau Chief
Name Title

Signature Date