

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

September 29, 1997

Project Name: Baker 3 site

Proposed Implementation Date: 10/1/94

Proponent: Riverside Contracting, Inc.

Type and Purpose of Action: The applicant proposes to mine, crush, stockpile and transport 34,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel from a 7.5 acre pit located 4 miles southwest of the town of Cut Bank. The estimated start-up date is September 15, 1997 and will result in a pit no deeper than 11 feet. The pit will be reclaimed to grassland after grading the slopes to at least a 3:1, replacing all topsoil and re-seeding.

Location: SW¼ NW¼ Sec. 26, T33N, R6W.

County: Glacier

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
<p>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?</p>	<p>[Y] The proposed mine is located on a relatively flat high, scenic but otherwise un-remarkable plain left from eroding mountains to the west during Tertiary time. The deposit consists of stratified layers of alluvial sand, gravel and cobbles that cover the deeper 60 million year old Cretaceous sandstones and shales. The two to three hundred million year old Paleozoic sandstone, mudstone and limestone rocks of the Overthrust can be seen to the west in the Sawtooth Mountain Range.</p> <p>Up to six inches of fairly well drained, silty sandy clay loam topsoil and up to six inches of caliche overlies the sand and gravel, and local terrace slopes demonstrate reasonably good stability. All soil material will be salvaged and stockpiled away from the affected land. Following mining, grading and ripping, the overburden and soils will be replaced, disked and seeded to stabilize the soil and prevent erosion. Microbes will re-colonize the soil.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>[N] The proponent may be required to obtain a Stormwater Discharge Permit from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality to assure the protection of surface waters. The nearest surface water is an intermittent stream, usually filled with irrigation water in summer, located several hundred feet to the north and will not be impacted directly by mining. The site will be mined to a depth of 11 feet which is considerably above the depth of the water table, estimated to be 100 feet below the surface. Therefore, the quality and quantity of the groundwater should not be impacted.</p>

<p>3. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?</p>	<p>[Y] Air quality will be degraded and there will be an increase in particulate matter. Crushers, screens and trucking equipment typically cause dusty conditions in disturbed soil sites. The operator must obtain air quality permits and abide by state air quality regulations.</p>
<p>4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>[Y] Native vegetation consists of needleandthread, western wheatgrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, prickly pear, blue gramma grasses which lie on a slope that grades toward the east. Vegetation covers 95% of the ground and will be removed and planted with species compatible with the proposed reclaimed use. Some native seed will remain viable in the salvaged topsoil and will re-generate. Under ideal conditions, native species from undisturbed, adjacent land will re-invade the site.</p>
<p>5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p>	<p>[N] Although the area is used primarily for grazing, it also supports populations of deer, antelope, game and non-game birds, rodents, raptors, insects and various other animal species.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>[N] The Natural Heritage Program literature search and site evaluations have not revealed any endangered or threatened plant or animal species.</p>
<p>7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>[N] A surface reconnaissance did not discover any cultural, historical or archeological resources. The operator will give appropriate protection to any values or artifacts discovered in the affected area. If significant resources are found, the operation will be routed around the site of discovery for a reasonable time until salvage can be conducted. The State Historical Preservation Office will be promptly notified.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>[Y] There will be a temporary deterioration of aesthetics while the operation is under way. However, reclamation will return the area to a visually acceptable landscape.</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 the project?</p>	<p>[N]</p>
<p>10. IMPACTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?</p>	<p>[N]</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>[Y] Heavy equipment and facilities including trucks, loaders and crushers will create hazards, but the operator must comply with all MSHA and OSHA regulations. The operator will employ proper precautions to avoid accidents.</p>
<p>12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?</p>	<p>[Y] The acreage listed in the Type and purpose of Action will be taken out of agricultural/grazing and put into industrial/commercial use. Upon completion of mining, the land will be returned to its previous use.</p>
<p>13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.</p>	<p>[N]</p>
<p>14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?</p>	<p>[N]</p>
<p>15. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?</p>	<p>[Y] The operation will require periodic site evaluations by DEQ staff until such time as the site is successfully reclaimed to the required post-mining use. However, these evaluations are usually performed in conjunction with other area operations.</p>
<p>16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?</p>	<p>[Y] City/County zoning clearance has been obtained.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>[N]</p>
<p>18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?</p>	<p>[N]</p>
<p>19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?</p>	<p>[N]</p>
<p>20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?</p>	<p>[N]</p>
<p>21. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:</p>	<p>[N]</p>

