

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
Permitting and Compliance Division  
Air and Waste Management Bureau  
P.O. Box 200901, Helena, Montana 59620  
(406) 444-3940

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)

Issued For: Stillwater Excavating  
P.O. Box 371  
Columbus, MT 59019

**RECEIVED**

**JUN 08 1998**

Air Quality Permit Number: 3006-00

Department Determination Issued: 6/8/98

**ENVIRONMENTAL  
QUALITY COUNCIL**

Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Compliance: An environmental assessment required by the MEPA, was completed for this project as follows.

Legal Description of Site: (portable source, original location) NE 1/4, Section 27, Township 2 S, Range 20 E, in Stillwater County, Montana.

Description of Project: This permit is for the operation of a portable crushing facility.

Benefits and Purpose of Proposal: This plant crushes and sorts sand and gravel for use in various construction industries.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider: No reasonable alternatives available.

A listing and appropriate evaluation of mitigation, stipulations and other controls enforceable by the agency or another government agency: A list of enforceable conditions and a BACT determination are contained in permit #3006-00.

Description and analysis of regulatory impacts on private property rights: The department has considered alternatives to the conditions imposed in this permit as part of the permit development. The department has determined that the permit conditions are reasonably necessary to ensure compliance with applicable requirements and demonstrate compliance with those requirements and do not unduly restrict private property rights.

Potential Impact on Physical Environment

		Major	Moderate	Minor	None	Unknown	Comments Attached
1	Terrestrial and Aquatic Life and Habitats			X			X
2	Water Quality, Quantity and Distribution			X			X
3	Geology and Soil Quality, Stability and Moisture			X			X
4	Vegetation Cover, Quantity and Quality			X			X
5	Aesthetics			X			X
6	Air Quality			X			X
7	Unique Endangered, Fragile or Limited Environmental Resource			X			X
8	Demands on Environmental Resource of Water, Air and Energy			X			X
9	Historical and Archaeological Sites			X			X
10	Cumulative and Secondary Impacts			X			X

Potential Impact on Human Environment

		Major	Moderate	Minor	None	Unknown	Comments Attached
1	Social Structures and Mores				X		X
2	Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity				X		X
3	Local and State Tax Base and Tax Revenue			X			X
4	Agricultural or Industrial Production			X			X
5	Human Health			X			X
6	Access to and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities			X			X
7	Quantity and Distribution of Employment			X			X
8	Distribution of Population			X			X
9	Demands for Government Services			X			X
10	Industrial and Commercial Activity			X			X
11	Locally Adopted Environmental Plans and Goals			X			X
12	Cumulative and Secondary Impacts			X			X

## Potential Impacts on Physical Environment

### 1. Terrestrial and Aquatic Life and Habitats

Common terrestrial species occupy the same areas as the crushing facility. The Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) has reported that the following unique, threatened, rare, or endangered species inhabit the general vicinity of this facility: Bald Eagles and Great Blue Herons. Although these species are known to live in the area, there are no known nesting sites within 2 miles of the facility. Therefore, the department feels the crushing facility is not likely to impact these, or other species. Aquatic life will not be affected by this permitting action, and there are no known riparian areas or wetlands that will be affected by this permitting action.

### 2. Water Quality, Quantity and Distribution

Water will be used as a means of pollution control at this facility, and will cause only minor disturbances to the area. Any spills, or leaks, from this operation will be properly handled by the operator as required by the department.

### 3. Geology and Soil Quality, Stability and Moisture

This site is located on the South side of Interstate 90, approximately one mile East of Columbus, Montana, on Highway 10. The topography of the area consists of high benches breaking off into rough hillsides and coulees falling off to the Yellowstone River Valley floor. The soils in the immediate area will likely be impacted by the proposed facility. However, the impacts will be minimal because the facility will be operating at an existing gravel pit.

### 4. Vegetation Cover, Quantity and Quality

Currently, the surrounding area is used as livestock grazing. There is no evidence that any rare plants, or vegetative communities exist in the area. Air emissions from the facility will result in only minor impacts on vegetation.

### 5. Aesthetics

The site is in a remote, farming/ranching area off an interstate highway. The facility will be located at an existing gravel pit. Therefore, the impacts on aesthetics as a result of this proposed action will be minimal. The proposed facility will generate excess light and noise, but the impacts on local residence will be minimal.

### 6. Air Quality

Air quality impacts from this facility will be minor. Permit #3006-00 includes conditions that will limit particulate emissions through a limit that requires the facility process less than 595,680 tons/year. The permit also contains opacity limits that will further reduce the emissions from the facility. In addition, this facility will only operate at this location on a temporary basis, thus minimizing any affects it might have on air quality in the area.

7. Unique Endangered, Fragile, or Limited Environmental Resources

The affects on unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources will be minor since the facility is using a relatively small portion of land in relation to the surrounding area.

8. Demands on Environmental Resources of Water, Air, and Energy

No significant demands will be placed on environmental resources. In order for the facility to operate, minor demands will be placed on local air, water, and energy resources.

9. Historical and Archaeological Sites

There are five previously recorded historic sites in the same general area as the proposed facility (1:The Tongue River Road; 2,3,and 4:three historic commercial development buildings; and 5: an historic residence). However, this permitting action will not affect any of the historic sites. A search of the cultural resources files at the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) produced no other known cultural or archeological findings in this area. The proposed facility will have only a minor effect on these historical sites. If any historical or archeological sites are found during the course of operation of this facility, it is the facility owner/operator's responsibility to promptly notify the SHPO. The crushing facility may move into other established sites that have been investigated during the issuance of the open cut mining contract.

10. Cumulative and Secondary Impacts

There is the potential for other operations, such as asphalt plants, crushing plants and screening plants to operate at this site. However, other facilities that want to locate at this site will be required to apply for, and receive, the appropriate permits from the department prior to operation. These permits will address any environmental impacts related to any future facilities. Overall, the facility will have minor impacts on the area due to the conditions and limitations contained in permit #3006-00. Other environmental regulations would apply if there are discharges into state waters, or if there are spills of regulated substances.

**Potential Impacts on Human Environment**

1. Social Structures

There will be no significant impact on social structures as a result of this permitting action.

2. Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity

The proposed facility will not cause a change in the cultural uniqueness and/or diversity of the area.

3. Local and State Tax Base and Tax Revenue

The facility is expected to have a minimal affect on the local and state tax base and tax revenue because other similar sources in the state have had little impact. In addition, the facility will serve a need and will generate local revenue in the process.

4. Agricultural or Industrial Production

The area listed in the type and purpose of action will be taken out of agricultural/grazing and put into industrial/commercial use. Once the mining is completed, the land will be returned to its previous use.

5. Human Health

Permit #3006-00 contains conditions that ensure the facility operates in compliance with all applicable standards. These standards are set to be protective of human health. In addition, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Mining Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) have regulations that regulate worker safety protocols, and require the facility be operated in a responsible manner.

6. Access to and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities

The proposed facility may cause minor impacts to the quality of recreational and wilderness areas nearby as a result of air emissions and noise. However, the facility might, indirectly, improve the pathways to these recreational and wilderness areas by providing materials that can be used to construct or repair roadways.

7. Quantity and Distribution of Employment

The proposed facility will not greatly affect the quantity and distribution of employment in the area. The facility will employ only two full-time workers.

8. Distribution of Population

The proposed facility will not require any additional, or less, housing in the area. Since this is a relatively small operation, and the facility is a temporary, seasonal source, any increase in population will be minor, and temporary.

9. Demands of Government Services

Since this is a relatively small operation, there will be minor increases in traffic on existing roads in the area while the facility is in operation. The only other government services required by this project are the agencies involved in issuing permits to the facility.

10. Industrial and Commercial Activity

This facility will represent a minor increase in the industrial activity in the area. However, the resulting road improvement projects from this operation may make it easier for other industrial, and commercial, activities to operate.

11. Locally Adopted Environmental Plans and Goals

The local zoning authority has been notified, and granted clearance for this project. There are no other local authorities that require approval/notification.

## 12. Cumulative and Secondary Impacts

Overall, the facility will have only minor impacts on the human environment. The limitations and conditions contained in permit #3006-00 will limit the impacts the facility has on the surrounding area. There is potential for other similar operations to locate at this site. However, any future plans to operate at this location will require appropriate analysis by the department. This analysis will address any potential impacts associated with additional sources operating at this location. Other environmental regulations may apply if there are discharges into state waters, or spills of regulated substances.

Recommendation: No EIS is required.

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is an appropriate level of analysis: This plant is a portable source and any impacts will be minimal. In addition, the controls contained in permit #3006-00 will further limit the emissions.

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction:  
Department of Environmental Quality, Reclamation.

Individuals or groups contributing to this EA: Department of Environmental Quality.

EA prepared by: Jeff Bellino  
Date: May 18, 1998