

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Ehman Site.

Proposed Implementation Date: March 13, 1998

Proponent: Riverside Contracting, Inc.

Type and Purpose of Action: The applicant proposes to mine, stockpile and haul a total of 10,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel borrow from a 1.5 acre site which is located ½ mile southeast of the town of Sula. The estimated start-up date is April 15, 1998. Topsoil will be stripped and stockpiled during the mining phase. The pit will be reclaimed to create a small pond and return a portion to hayfield. The surrounding area will be graded to a 3:1, topsoiled and seeded to pasture grass. They will follow department guidelines on pond construction. The date of final reclamation would be November 15, 1998.

Location: NW¼ SW¼ Section 16, T1N, R19W

County: Ravalli

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>[N] Up to 18 inches of well fairly well drained, rocky, gravelly loam topsoil overlies the glacial gravel deposit. Local terrace slopes demonstrate fair stability. Ripping after activities are complete should alleviate soil compaction. All soil material will be salvaged and stockpiled away from the affected land. Following mining, grading and ripping, the soils will be replaced to the high water mark of the created pond. Microbes are expected to 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] There are no water wells in the area. Groundwater is at approximately 30 feet. The landowner is in the process of obtaining the necessary permit from DNRC to run an existing irrigation ditch, which comes from Camp Creek, into the excavation to create a pond and have an outlet ditch from the pond to Camp Creek. The pond would be created using the department's Pond Guidelines.</p> <p>Camp Creek is located 50 feet to the north, and drains into the East Fork of the Bitterroot River. All fuel, lubricants and chemicals will be kept out of the permit area, and any accidental spills or major leaks from equipment operating in the pit will immediately be excavated and removed from the site. Therefore, potable ground and surface water is not expected to be adversely 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 under this operation. Dozers, loaders and trucking equipment typically cause dusty conditions in disturbed soil sites. The site is not located within a Class 1 airshed. No crusher or wash plant is proposed.</p>
<p>4. VEGETATION COVERS, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>[Y] Vegetation covers 100% of the ground and consists of pasture grass and crops which lie on a level slope, and will be removed during mining. The ground will be re-planted with oats and grasses for grazing and to protect the replaced soils. Some native seed may remain viable in the salvaged topsoil and may regenerate. There is a severe infestation of spotted knapweed, a legally defined noxious weed. No rare plants or cover types were identified and none were identified during a ground search. There are no known rare or sensitive plants in the area.</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>[Y] Although the area is used primarily for crops and grazing, it also supports populations of whitetail deer, moose, black bear, mountain lion, rodents, song birds, coyotes, foxes, insects and various other animal species. Population numbers for these species is not known. The mine site is frequented by those animals and they will be temporarily displaced as the mine is operated. The mine is not expected to significantly degrade wildlife populations, and the ponds created may provide greater access to a local water body for some 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] Site evaluations have not revealed any other endangered or threatened plant or animal species on site that would be significantly impacted. The Natural Heritage Program literature search have not revealed any endangered or threatened plant or animal species that would be directly affected.</p>
<p>7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>[N] Although there are important cultural values in the general area, this site has been previously disturbed by modern man, thus destroying the integrity of resources that may have existed. A surface reconnaissance did not discover any cultural, historical or archeological resources. 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 deterioration of aesthetics while the operation is under way. There is also noise from truck traffic hauling to various projects. However, reclamation will leave the site in a landscape condition that is compatible with the surrounding area. There is and has been an alteration of the viewshed as a result of farming and ranching, and use and maintenance of State Highway 93.</p> <p>Noise levels are generally within the range of 60 to 90 decibels measured on-site, decreasing with distance. As a comparison, sound levels for ordinary activities such as close conversation at 60 decibels and music from a radio at 70 decibels are considered to be moderate. Levels above 90 decibels are severe, and prolonged exposure can lead to hearing loss. The site is visible by homes in the local area and to traffic along the highway. Floodlights from dark period operations would increase visibility and awareness of the operation.</p> <p>These impacts are intermittent and of relatively short duration but are in addition to the noise created by the increased truck traffic hauling to various projects.</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	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 and loaders will create hazards, but the operator must comply with all MSHA and OSHA regulations. The operator will employ proper precautions to avoid accidents. Signage and flaggers would reduce traffic dangers during times of heavy truck traffic entering and leaving the site. Excessive and prolonged noise and light could increase stress and induce difficulty sleeping. Both of these effects may be considered harmful to human health if the activities are continuous. This proposed operation is expected to create these impacts sporadically and for short periods; it therefore should not significantly affect human health.</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 grazing/agriculture and put into industrial/commercial use. Upon completion of mining, the land will be reclaimed to a pond and crops.</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. However, these evaluations are usually performed in conjunction with other area operations. The site will add further traffic to the highway during times of operation and may cause need for additional highway department and highway patrol services.</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>[N]</p>

17. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this 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: The site would not be permitted and impacts would not occur at this location. The landowner would be denied further development of his minerals at this time. Another site would be selected elsewhere and impacts would be transferred there.

Approval of Application as submitted: The pit would be reclaimed as requested.

23. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted: State Historic Preservation Office, Montana Natural Heritage Program, Ravalli County Planning Office.

24. Other Governmental Agencies with Jurisdiction, List of Permits Needed: None

25. Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts:

Impacts of this permit are unlikely to be significant on the environment because of lack of human population density and lack of significant or critical wildlife habitat or species.

26. Regulatory impact on private property: The analysis conducted in response to the Private Property Assessment Act indicates no impact since this Plan of Operations would not require “Special Stipulations” in order to comply with the Opencut Mining Act.

Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis:

EIS More Detailed EA No Further Analysis

EA Prepared By: Rod Samdahl Title: Reclamation Specialist

Approved By: Jerry Burke Title: Supervisor, Opencut Program, IEMB

Signature

Date