

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Steingruber

Proposed Implementation Date: Winter 1999

Proponent: Jefferson County

Type and Purpose of Action: The proponent proposes to mine, screen and/or crush, stockpile and transport 10,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel from a 1.5 acre site for use on county roads. The site would be reclaimed by recontouring, respreading the topsoil and reseeding the site with grasses. The reclaimed use would be grazing. The proposed operation is 4 miles north of Willow Creek. The site would be reclaimed by November of 2005.

Location: NE¼, Sec. 1, T1N, R1W

County: Jefferson

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] The proposed operation is located on the edge of an alluvial fan and would be an expansion of a gravel pit mined in the past numerous times, with no topsoil salvage or reclamation. The facility and stockpiles would be located in the existing pit area. The proponent would mine to the north daylighting the pit to the south and west. The topsoil is a cobbly silty loam 6 inches deep on the proposed mine area. There is no overburden to salvage. Topsoil would be stripped and stockpiled and after regrading would be evenly replaced on the mine area. The facility and stockpile area is devoid of soil due to past mining, but the area would be ripped and seeded. Microorganisms should invade the soil. There are no fragile, compactible or unstable soils present, unusual geologic features, or special reclamation considerations.</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 depth to the water table is estimated to be greater than 60 feet below the current pit floor. The seasonal high and low water tables are unknown. The proposed operation would be mined starting at the foot of the existing pit highwall and mine north. The depth of mining would be a maximum of 15 feet. There are no water wells within 1,000 feet. There would be no impact to the groundwater. Any accidental spills of petroleum-based products would be immediately cleaned up and the contaminated material properly disposed. The site upon reclamation would be daylighted to the west and south into the existing pit. The slopes to the east and north would be regraded to 3:1 or flatter. The existing gravel pit disturbed an ephemeral drainage to the south. Jefferson County as part of their road project will be replacing a culvert and repairing the drainage. The proposed operation would not impact this drainage. There would be no impact to any surface water.</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 would be degraded. The proponent will need to obtain Air Quality Permits from the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality as processing facilities are involved with the proposed operation.</p>
<p>4. VEGETATION COVERS, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>[N] There is no vegetation on the previously mined area. Bluebunch wheatgrass, fescue, prairie junegrass, big sage, and rubber rabbit brush are present on the area not previously mined. Both native and non native grasses would be seeded on the site upon recontouring and retopsoiling. A literature search was done by the Montana National Heritage Program and no rare plants or cover types were identified as present at this site and none were identified during a ground search.</p>

5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	[N] Various mammals, birds, and reptiles may traverse the site.
6. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or an endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Species of special concern?	[N] The Montana Natural Heritage Program did not identify any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat as present on the site. A ground search was conducted and no threatened or endangered a species or identified habitats were found on the site of the proposed operation. No wetlands are present. According to the literature search by the Montana Natural Heritage Program, near Three Forks, which is approximately 5 air miles northeast of the proposed operation, a Milk Snake was observed and a Peregrine Falcon historic eyrie was observed approximately 2 air miles east along the Jefferson River. The proposed action would have no impact on either species, due to the the distance from the observations.
7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	[N] A cultural resource survey was conducted and no resources were found on the site. If the operator of the proposed operation discovers any cultural resources the operation must be routed around the site of discovery for a reasonable amount of time until salvage can be made. The State Historical Preservation Office must 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] The site is visible from the county road, but this road is fairly remote and used mainly by locals.
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 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?	[N] 1.5 acres will be taken out of limited grazing until such time as the site is successfully reclaimed.
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:

Alternative # 1: 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, State Historic Preservation Office, & Jefferson County Commissioners & Weed Control District

24. Other Governmental Agencies with Jurisdiction, List of Permits Needed: Mine Safety & Health Administration for safety permit; Montana Department of Labor & Industry, Bureau of Safety for safety permit:

25. Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts: Impacts are unlikely to be significant on the general environment because of the small amount of disturbance and location.

26. Regulatory Impact on Private Property: The analysis conducted in response to the Private Property Assessment Act indicates no impact.

Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis:

EIS More Detailed EA No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Prepared By: Jerry Burke Title: Supervisor, Opencut Mining Program, IEMB

Approved By: Steve Welch Title: Industrial and Energy Minerals Bureau Chief

Signature

Date