

# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**Project Name:** BLM/Bent # 4 **Proposed Implementation Date:** Summer 1999

**Proponent:** Core Home Corporation, Inc.

**Type and Purpose of Action:** The proponent proposes to mine, stockpile, and transport 13,850 cubic yards of bentonite from a 5.0 acre site; reclaim the site by recontouring, respread the topsoil, and reseeding the site with grasses. The reclaimed use would be grazing and the site would be reclaimed by August of 2003.

**Location:** NW¼ SW¼, Sec. 12, T27N, R36E

**County:** Valley

**N = Not present or No Impact will occur.**

**Y = Impacts may occur (explain under Potential Impacts).**

<b>IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</b>	
<b>RESOURCE</b>	<b>[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES</b>
<b>1. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:</b> Are fragile, compactible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?	<b>[N]</b> The proposed operation is located on a gently rolling hill with numerous bentonite outcrops. Portions of the surrounding area have been mined for bentonite in the past with reclamation having occurred. Much of the area is covered with bentonite outcrops which are devoid of soils. The soils that are present are of a clay texture and are 12 inches deep including the 6 inches of subsoil. All available soil materials would be salvaged, stockpiled, and respread on the site upon completion of regrading. Soil microbes will recolonize the soils.
<b>2. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:</b> 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?	<b>[N]</b> There are no water wells near the site. The nearest surface water is the North Fork of Little Beaver Creek which is approximately 1 mile to the south. The depth to ground water is estimated at 150 feet plus. The proposed operation will have a maximum depth of 25'. Any bulk fuel storage tanks would be lined and bermed and be of sufficient size to contain any leaks or spills. The proponent will not need to obtain a Stormwater Discharge Permit from the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality, but will implement best management practices to prevent any off site erosion or sedimentation.
<b>3. AIR QUALITY:</b> Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	<b>[Y]</b> Air quality will be degraded, by the removal of soil, mining and transporting the bentonite, and reclamation, but air quality standards would not be surpassed. Therefore, the proponent would not need to get an Air Quality Permit from the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality.
<b>4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:</b> Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	<b>[N]</b> The vegetation on the site consists of very sparse native vegetation. The cover is approximately 0% to 5%. A literature search was done by the Montana Natural Heritage Program and no rare plants or cover types were identified and none were identified during a ground search.
<b>5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:</b> Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	<b>[Y]</b> The site may be utilized to some extent by deer, rodents, antelope and various species of land birds. The literature search done by the Montana Natural Heritage Program has identified the Mountain Plover as present in the area, but the proposed mine site is not suitable Mountain Plover habitat.
<b>6. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:</b> Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Species of special concern?	<b>[Y]</b> See 5 above
<b>7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:</b> Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	<b>[Y]</b>

<b>8. AESTHETICS:</b> 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] A cultural resource survey was completed in the past and no resources were found.
<b>9. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:</b> Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?	[N]
<b>10. IMPACTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:</b> Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?	[N]

<b>IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION</b>	
<b>RESOURCE</b>	<b>POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES</b>
<b>11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:</b> Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	[Y] There will be increased hazards because of the 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.
<b>12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:</b> Will the project add to or alter these activities?	[N]
<b>13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:</b> Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	[N]
<b>14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:</b> Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	[N]
<b>15. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:</b> 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
<b>16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:</b> Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	[N]
<b>17. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:</b> Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?	[N]
<b>18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:</b> Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	[N]
<b>19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:</b> Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	[N]
<b>20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:</b> Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	[N]
<b>21. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:</b>	[N]

**22. Alternatives Considered:** No action: pit would not be permitted and impacts would not occur at this location.

**23. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted:** State Historic Preservation Office, Montana Heritage Program, Valley County Weed Management Board.

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

**25. Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts:** Impacts are unlikely to be significant because of the small amount of disturbance, short duration of the project, and mitigated measures proposed.

**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: Bureau Chief, Industrial & Energy Minerals Bureau

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Signature

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Date