

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Cominco

Proposed Implementation Date: May 1999

Proponent: Schellinger Construction Co., Inc.

Type and Purpose of Action: The proponent proposes to mine, crush a portion of the product, stockpile and transport 150,000 tons of sand and gravel from an 4.0 acre site for use in the reconstruction of a portion of Highway 10A. The site would be reclaimed by recontouring, respreading the topsoil and reseeding the site with grasses. The reclaimed use would be dryland pasture. The proposed hours of operation for crushing would be 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. Monday through Friday, however the most likely situation will be 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. Monday through Thursday and 6:00 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday. Crushing operations would last approximately 2 months. The normal hours of operation for hauling the product would be 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, but there may be occasion to haul on Saturday. There is no asphalt plant involved with the proposed operation. The site would be reclaimed by December 31 of 2000.

Location: NE¼ Sec. 10, T9N, R13W

County: Granite

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 east side of the Flint Creek alluvial valley. The proponent would mine the site to a maximum depth of 50 feet. The topsoil is very cobbly clay loam and is approximately 6 inches deep. The proposed mine area has approximately 4 inches of overburden. The topsoil and the overburden would be stripped and stockpiled separately and after regrading the overburden and then the topsoil would be evenly replaced. The site would be reclaimed to have 3:1 or flatter slopes to the east, south, and north and be daylighted to the west. Microorganisms should reinvade 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>[Y] Douglas Creek is approximately 1,000 feet to the west across the road going up Douglas Creek. The proponent would line and berm any fuel storage areas with impermeable materials to contain any spills. Any accidental spills of petroleum-based products would be immediately cleaned up and the contaminated material properly disposed. Best Management Practices (BMP) would be used to contain any stormwater. There would be no impact to any surface water. There is one well just west of the site and it is 65 feet deep and at one time supplied water to a residence, which was located at the site. The site would be mined into a flat spot on which the residence set. The existing elevation of the level area would serve as the elevation of the floor of the excavation. The site would be mined into the hill to a depth of 50 feet. The elevation of the pit floor would be greater than 50 feet above the static water in the well. There should not be any impact to ground 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 and there would be an increase in particulate matter and odor. Dozers, loaders, crushers and trucking equipment typically cause dusty conditions in disturbed soil sites. However, crushers are regulated for dust and other emissions, and the equipment used must be tested and approved by the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality. The proper Air Quality Permits must be secured and any conditions attached to the permits must be followed. Spray bars will be used on the crusher and transfer points, and water</p>

	would be applied within the site and on the haul road as needed to reduce dust.
4. VEGETATION COVERS, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	[N] The vegetation on the site consists of bluebunch wheatgrass, fescue and blue grama. Grasses and legumes 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.
5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	[N] Various mammals and birds may use the site occasionally.
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 or near the site. A ground search was conducted and no threatened or endangered a species or identified habitats were found on the site. No species of special concern were found on the site during the ground search.
7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	[N] A cultural resource survey was done and no resources were found. 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?	[Y] The site is visible from Highway 10A and from persons traveling the road up Douglas Creek, but it is a short-term operation and would be reclaimed by December 31, 2000. There are no nearby residences. The proposed hours of operation for crushing would be 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. Monday through Friday, however the most likely situation will be 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. Monday through Thursday and 6:00 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday. Crushing operations would last approximately 2 months. The normal hours for transporting the products would be 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, but there may be occasion when hauling would occur on Saturday. Lights and generators running during the hours of operation could increase local impacts. On-site noise levels generated by operating equipment at the pit are generally within the range of 60 to 90 decibels, but decrease with distance. As a comparison, sound levels for ordinary activities such as close conversation and music from a radio are 60 decibels and 70 decibels and are considered to be moderate. Levels above 90 decibels are severe, and prolonged exposure can lead to hearing loss.
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 would 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] 4 acres would be taken out of pasture 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] 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:

- A. Denial: The pit would not be permitted and impacts from mining would not occur at this location. The owner of the gravel resource would be denied full utilization of his property at this time.
- B. Approval of the application: The Plan of Operation includes water protection, soil salvage, and placement of soil and overburden stockpiles to act as sight and sound barriers; those practices will provide a reduction of expected impacts.

23. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted Montana Natural Heritage Program, Montana Dept. of Transportation, Granite County Commissioners Weed Control District.

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

25. Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts: Impacts are unlikely to be significant on the general environment because of the short duration of the project, mining and reclamation practices employed and specific impacts mitigation.

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