ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Boe **Proposed Implementation Date:** June 99

Proponent: A.M. Welles, Inc.

Type and Purpose of Action: The proponent proposes to mine and transport up to 100,000 cubic yards of borrow material from a 6.2 acre site for a Montana Dept. of Transportation project on Highway 287. The site would operate from 7:00 A.M. through 6:00 P.M. Monday through Friday. The operation would last a total of 3 months. There would not be a crusher or asphalt plant involved with this operation. The site would be reclaimed by recontouring, respreading the topsoil and reseeding the site with spring barley. The reclaimed use would be pasture.

Location: SW¼, Sec. 7, T4S, R5W **County:** Madison

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**
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?	**[N]** The proposed operation is located in alluvial materials and the area of the proposed operation slopes gradually to the west. The soil is of a sandy silt loam and is approximately 6 inches deep. Beneath the soil are sands and gravels. The site would be daylighted to the west and have 3:1 to 4:1 slopes in the other directions. There are no fragile, compactible or unstable soils present, unusual geologic features or special reclamation considerations.
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?	**[N]** There are two water wells within 1,000 feet of the site. The static water level at the site of the proposed operation is estimated to be at 30 feet judging from the wells in the area. The site would be mined to a maximum depth of 12 feet. The nearest surface water is Wisconsin Creek, which is more than 1,000 feet to the south. No fuel would be stored at the site. Any leaks or spills of petroleum-based products would be immediately cleaned up and properly disposed of. The design of the proposed operation is such that any runoff would drain inward on the site thus avoiding any off site sedimentation or erosion. There should be no impact to ground or surface water.
3. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	**[Y]** Air quality would be degraded, but the proponent must comply with air quality standards. A water truck would be onsite to control any dust on the access road and mining area.
4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	**[N]** The vegetation in the area of the proposed operation contains non-native species and has been heavily grazed. The site would be seeded with spring barley upon recontouring and retopsoiling. A literature search was done by the Montana National Heritage Program and no rare plants or cover types were identified 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]**
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?	**[N]** Ground and literature searches were conducted and no threatened or endangered species or identified habitat were found on the site. There are no wetlands on the site of the proposed operation.
7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	**[N]** The site has been previously disturbed by modern man and Steve Platt, archaeologist for the Montana Dept. of Transportation did not require a cultural resource survey. 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]**
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 borrow material. The applicant must comply with OSHA and MSHA regulations however, and 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]** There will be a temporary loss of agricultural land until 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]** This is a temporary operation with reclamation to be completed by the fall of 2000. To successfully argue that taxable value has been affected, (decreased), the appeals process must be followed through the local and state level. To this date, there has not been a reduction in taxable value of property affected by opencut mineral mining.
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. The area of the proposed operation is not zoned.
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 & Madison County Commissioners and Weed Control District, Steve Platt, Archaeologist, Montana Dept. of Transportation. Four Resident Notification Forms were submitted and three of the forms were signed as not being opposed to the proposal and one party was opposed.

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 short duration of the project.

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 [X] 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

_____ _____

Signature Date