

# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**February 2, 2000**

**Project Name:** Valley View pit

**Proposed Implementation Date:** August, 1999

**Proponent:** Lawrence & Helen Riffel

**Type and Purpose of Action:** The proponent proposes to mine, crush, screen, stockpile, and transport 1,500,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel from an 18.4-acre site located 2½ miles north of Eureka. The site would be mined to a depth of 83 feet in levels up the hillside from the pasture at the valley floor. The reclaimed use would be pasture. The site would be reclaimed by re-contouring, re-topsoiling the mine, facility and stockpile area and reseeding the site with grasses. The slopes of the pit would be reduced to at least 3:1. Reclamation would be completed in approximately 2015.

**Location:** SW¼ SE¼, Sec. 2, T36N, R27W

**County:** Lincoln

**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><b>1. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:</b> Are fragile, compactible or unstable soils present? Are their unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>[N] The proposed operation is located in a glacial alluvial valley in sands and gravels of the Quaternary to Recent geologic age. The proponent would mine to a depth of 83 feet which is well above the low water table. The maximum highwall in any one place will be only 40 feet, but since it is located on a side hill, the total drop from the top of the highest cut will be 83 feet above the bottom of the lowest cut. The mine area would have all available soil stripped and salvaged. The facility and stockpile areas would have 6 inches of soil material stripped and salvaged. The soil is a silty loam. Soil microbes should re-colonize the soils. There are no fragile, compactible, or unstable soils present, unusual geologic features, or special reclamation considerations. The reclaimed slopes will be reduced to a 3:1 or flatter angle.</p>
<p><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?</p>	<p>[N] The Glen Lake irrigation ditch is located above the pit site but no water will enter or leave the site. The site would be mined with dozers. There would be no discharge from the pit area. There are two water wells in the area. Both wells are in the SE¼ of Section 2, drilled 160 feet and 27 feet deep. The mine will not intercept potable water or otherwise effect these two wells. No bulk fuel storage will be located on site. The proponent will not need to obtain a Stormwater Discharge Permit from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, but will implement best management practices to prevent any off site erosion or sedimentation.</p>
<p><b>3. AIR QUALITY:</b> 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, but the proponent must comply with air quality standards and an Air Quality Permit obtained from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality for the crusher.</p>
<p><b>4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:</b> Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>[N] Vegetation on the site of the proposed operation consists of native fescue, needleandthread, pine grass, smooth brome, various wheatgrasses, quackgrass and roses, and covers 80% of the ground. A literature search was done by the Montana Natural Heritage Program and no threatened or endangered plants or animals or rare plants or cover types were identified and none were identified during a ground search.</p>
<p><b>5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:</b> Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p>	<p>[N] The site may be utilized to some extent by deer, rodents, and various species of birds.</p>
<p><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?</p>	<p>[Y] A ground search was conducted and no threatened or endangered species or identified habitats were found on the site. The literature search conducted by the Montana Natural Heritage Program identified the general Northern Continental Divide area (the area from Canada south to State Highway 200 and from the East Front to the Swan and Stillwater Rivers) as occupied habitat</p>

	for grizzly bears. It is highly unlikely that this proposed operation would impact the bear due to the lack of suitable habitat on the site and the nearby presence of residences.
<b>7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:</b> Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	[N] A cultural resource ground survey and field inspection was conducted and no resources were found.
<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?	[Y] The proposed operation is located on a hillside across from the Owens & Hurst lumber mill and is very visible to the mill and traffic along the highway. The project is long termed with reclamation being planned for the year 2015. The pit is visible to residences in the area, and is the source of grading and aggregate material for home development adjacent to the pit.
<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]

### IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
<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] County zoning clearance has been obtained.
<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]

