

# DEQ OPENCUT MINING PROGRAM

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Myers Gravel Site.

Proposed Implementation Date: 4/2000.

Proponent: J&S Construction, Inc.

Type and Purpose of Action: Proponent has applied for a 1.5-acre Mined Land Reclamation Permit where they propose to remove 15,000 cubic yards of gravel from a 0.5-acre pit. Mobile equipment and a crusher will be used in the operation. Proponent has submitted all application materials required under the Opencut Mining Act and the Rules and Regulations governing the Act. Proponent proposes to properly prepare, mine, and reclaim the site to a postmining land use of rangeland. Proponent is legally bound through their reclamation permit with the state to reclaim the site. The estimated date for completion of final reclamation is 11/00.

Location: NWSW 28, T3S, R19E

County: Stillwater

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? Is any on-site waste disposal planned? Are any special reclamation features planned? Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>[Y] Geology and Topography. The proposed site is in the sedimentary plains portion of the state. It is located on a small knob on the face of the east bench facing the Stillwater River drainage way. There are no unusual geologic features.</p> <p>Soil and Overburden. There is an approximate 6" thickness of soil over an approximate 18" thickness of overburden. All soil material will be salvaged and stockpiled for future reclamation use or direct hauled to areas prepared for final reclamation.</p> <p>Waste Disposal and Grading. There will be no waste disposal at the site. The east highwall that will be used will be graded to a slope of 3:1 or less, and the current flat pit floor will be extended. Removal of mine material will alter the ground surface; however, proponent is required to properly grade the site and blend it into the surrounding topography. There are no unusual 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] Surface Water. It does not appear that surface water is a factor for consideration at this site since it is on a hillside above the Stillwater River valley floor and no springs are evident in the immediate area.</p> <p>Groundwater. It does not appear that groundwater is a factor for consideration at this site since the old pit floor does not show any evidence of groundwater and there are no springs in the immediate vicinity of the site.</p> <p>Wells. It is likely that there is a well at the residence which is several hundred feet east and about 50' downhill from the proposed site. Because the gravel site is above and distant from the nearby residence, and there is no groundwater evident at the old pit floor, it is highly unlikely that this operation could impact any well in the area.</p>

	Surface and groundwater resources should not be adversely affected by the operation. Proponent has committed to protecting surface water and groundwater resources.
3. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	[N] Pollutants and particulates may be produced on a temporary basis by this operation. Proponent is required to comply with state air quality regulations. Proponent states that they will use a water truck to control dust. This will be a short term, small operation.
4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY, AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	[Y] Premining Vegetation. The site is currently bare, open pit and native rangeland.  Postmining Vegetation. The site will be reclaimed to rangeland consisting of various native plants.  Site Protection and Weed Control. Proponent will implement adequate site protection and management measures until seeded or planted vegetation is established. Proponent has committed to appropriate weed control measures. The county weed district has been notified.  The Montana Natural Heritage Program report did not identify any rare plants or cover types as being present on or near the site. Abundant similar habitat exists in the area.
5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN, AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds, or fish?	[N] The site consists of common prairie habitat. A site visit did not reveal extraordinary use by wildlife or use by unique wildlife.
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] None of the mentioned resources appear to be present. Similar habitat is abundant in the area. No wetland, riparian, or other less common habitat will be affected.  The Montana Natural Heritage Program report identified a bald eagle nest as being present approximately 1.5 miles to the northeast of the site of the proposed operation. Dennis Flath, Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks wildlife biologist, was contacted by telephone and he stated the nest is of sufficient distance from the proposed operation and the operation should have no affect on the nest or eagles.
7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological, or paleontological resources present?	[N] A walk of the area revealed none of the mentioned resources. If cultural resources are found during mining and reclamation operations, proponent has committed to promptly notifying the State Historic Preservation Office and routing the operation around the site of discovery for a reasonable time until salvage can be made.
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 aesthetic impact will be temporary and insignificant due to the small size of the site and its location relatively out-of-site above the highway. The residence to the east does not object to the operation. There are no nearby residences or high-use areas.
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] The operation will not use resources that are limited in the area. The operation should not affect or be affected by other activities in the area.
10. IMPACTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are there other studies, plans, or projects on this tract?	[N] Any affect on other environmental resources will be temporary. The operation should not affect any environmental studies.
<b>IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION</b>	
<b>RESOURCE</b>	<b>POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES</b>
11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	[N] This project should not significantly increase health and safety risks in the area if the proponent and landowner manage the operation and site in a responsible manner. Proponent is required to comply with OSHA and MSHA regulations.

12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL, AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	[N] No significant impacts are anticipated.
13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move, or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	[N] No significant impacts are anticipated.
14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	[N] Tax revenues have not been significantly affected by similar projects in the state.
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 proponent will use local roads to distribute their product. No other government services should be significantly affected.
16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	[N] Author is not aware of any other environmental plans or goals. The local zoning authority has been contacted and clearance 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] There are no wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through the site.
18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	[N] No significant impacts are anticipated.
19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	[N] No significant impacts are anticipated.
20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	[N] No significant impacts are anticipated.
21. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	[N] Author is not aware of such circumstances.

22. Alternatives Considered: Denial. The owner of the material resource would be denied full utilization of their property at this time. The proponent may seek another material source.

23. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted: Montana Natural Heritage Program, State Historic Preservation Office, local zoning authority, county weed control board, Dennis Flath, wildlife biologist for the Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, on April 12, 2000, and landowner

24. Other Governmental Agencies with Jurisdiction, List of Permits That May Be Needed: Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Air and Water Protection Bureaus.

25. Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts: Any impacts should be temporary or relatively insignificant and confined to the general area. Implementation of the Mining and Reclamation Plan should return this area to an aesthetically pleasing and useful condition.

26. Regulatory Impact on Private Property: The analysis conducted in response to the Private Property Assessment Act indicates no impact. The Department does not plan to deny the application or impose conditions that would restrict the use of private property.

Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis:

EIS                       More Detailed EA                       No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Prepared By: Mark Carlstrom      Title: Mine Reclamation Specialist      Date: 04/03/00

Approved By: Jerry Burke

Title: Opencut Mining Program Supervisor, IEMB

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Signature

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Date