ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
September 1, 2000

Project Name: Ramsey Offerdahl pit **Proposed Implementation Date:** July, 2000
Proponent: O. Ramsey Offerdahl
Type and Purpose of Action: The applicant proposes to mine crush and transport 25,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel from a 3.7-acre site located 17 miles southeast of Conrad. The site would be mined to a depth of 12 feet. The reclaimed use would be pasture. The site would be reclaimed by re-contouring, re-topsoiling the mine area and reseeding the site with grasses. The slopes of the pit would be reduced to at least 3:1. Reclamation would be completed by the spring of 2010.
Location: NE¼ NW¼, Sec. 2, T27N, R1E **County:** Pondera

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 their unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?	**[N]** The proposed operation is located in sands and gravels of the Quaternary to Recent geologic age. The proponent would mine to a depth of 12 feet, which is well above the low water table. The mine area would have all available soil stripped and salvaged. The mine will have 6 inches of soil and 6 inches of overburden material stripped and salvaged. The soil is a sandy loam. The overburden is of a sandy nature, up to six inches deep and would be salvaged from the mine area. Soil microbes should re-colonize the soils. 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]** Pondera Coulee is located ½ mile north of the site. The site would be mined with a loader. The period of low water table is February and March. There would be no discharge from the pit area. There is a community water well 500 feet north of the pit that will not be affected by this mine. 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.
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 will be degraded, but the proponent must control dust generated from the site.
4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	**[N]** Vegetation on the site of the proposed operation consists of annual grain crops 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.
5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	**[N]** The site may be utilized to some extent by deer, rodents, and various species of birds.
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]** 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 did not identify any species of concern.
7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	**[N]** A cultural resource ground survey was conducted and no resources were found.

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 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.
12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	**[N]**
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]** County 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. Alternative # 1: Denial. Impacts would not occur at this location. However, the proponent could apply to mine another area and similar impacts may be expected.

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

24. Other Governmental Agencies with Jurisdiction, List of Permits Needed: Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality for Air Quality Permit; Mine Safety and Health Administration for safety permit.

25. Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts: Impacts are unlikely to be significant because of the proposed operation's location and the lack of critical wildlife or plant species or habitats.

Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis:

[ ] EIS [ ] More Detailed EA [X] No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Prepared By: Rod Samdahl Title: Opencut Mining Program Reclamation Specialist, IEMB

Approved By: Jerry Burke Title: Opencut Mining Program Supervisor, IEMB

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Signature Date