ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: BLM/Alkali Flats **Proposed Implementation Date:** Fall 2000
Proponent: Lewis & Clark County
Type and Purpose of Action: The proponent proposes to mine and transport 6,000 cubic yards of pit run sand, gravel & clay from a one acre site for placement on local county roads. There would not be an asphalt plant connected with this operation. The site would be reclaimed to waterfowl habitat by recontouring, respreading the topsoil down to the high water mark and seeding the site with reed canarygrass and Garrison creeping meadow foxtail. The site would be reclaimed by December of 2010.
Location: SE¼, Sec. 34, T22N, R8W **County:** Lewis & Clark

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 on a fairly level area known as Alkali Flat. This area slopes very gently to the north and is approximately 13 miles north of Augusta. The proponent would salvage the 12 inches of soil material which is a clay texture and very high in salts. Beneath the soil is a very heavy clay overburden that would be mixed with the gravel beneath the over burden and the product would be transported to local county roads and laid down. After regrading the site would be an irregular shaped depression with 3:1 and flatter slopes in all directions. An island would be constructed to provide a nesting area for waterfowl. Topsoil would be replaced on the slopes and the island down to the highwater mark. There are no fragile, compactible or unstable soils present, no 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?	**[Y]** The site is located on the edge of a wetland that the BLM wants deepened to create a permanent source of water for waterfowl. The estimated depth of water during high water is at or near the surface and approximately 9 feet during periods of low water. The site would be mined to a maximum depth of 10 feet. Any sediment would drain into the pit area. There are no water wells within 1,000 feet of the proposed pit. If fuel is stored on site a bermed and lined containment structure would be built to contain any possible spill. The proposed operation should not impact groundwater or any surface water sources.
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. No crusher or other processing equipment would be utilized with this proposed operation. A water truck would be used to control dust on the haul road and the mine area.
4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	**[N]** Vegetation covers only about 1 percent of the site of the proposed operation. Upon regrading and topsoiling reed canarygrass and Garrison creeping meadow foxtail would be seeded. A literature search was done by the Montana National Heritage Program and no rare plants or cover types were identified as being present on the site and none were observed 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?	**[Y]** The site is located next to the Sun River Game Range and various species of small, medium and large mammals along with various species of birds are seen within the general area. The site of the proposed operation is very small and there is no habitat suitable for wildlife.

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]** The Montana Natural Heritage Program did a literature search and the site is within the boundary designated as occupied habitat for the grizzly bear. The site is in an upland area and is approximately 2 mile from the nearest riparian area that is typically used as a travel corridor for grizzly bear. *A g*round search was conducted and no threatened or endangered a species or identified habitats were found on the site.
7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	**[N]** A cultural resource survey was done and no cultural resources were identified on the site. 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 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]** There will be a temporary loss of grazing on 7 acres of 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]**
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]**
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. Impacts would not occur at this location but, however, the proponent could apply to mine another area and similar impacts may be expected.

23. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted: Montana Natural Heritage Program & Lewis & Clark County Weed Control District.

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

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Signature Date