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DNRC - Trust Land Management Division
D.N.R.C.

DS-252

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Letz Pit (aggregate) G-1406-04	**Proposed Implementation Date:** Fall 2004

Proponent: Pondera County Road Department

Type and Purpose of Action: Pondera County Road Department has requested to mine 10,000 cubic yards of pit run gravel material for road resurfacing projects within Pondera County. The material will be screened to minus two inch with the oversized material being crushed. The crushing and screening will be subcontracted to a secondary contractor. A .78-acre area has been blocked out for this proposal. Assuming an 8-foot aggregate thickness this area has been calculated to contain 10,080 yards of suitable material. Factoring in a variable gravel seam thickness, a secondary reserve area of .04 acres, estimated to contain 535 cubic yards of material was also blocked out. Prior to mining, the top six inches of soil cover will be stripped back for pit reclamation. An active noxious weed program already exists for this tract between DNRC and Pondera County.

Location: T29N, R2W, Sec 26 SWSW	**County:** Pondera

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1.	PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	DNRC, Box 961 Conrad, Montana Surface Owner Pondera County Road Department, 20 4th Ave. Conrad, MT 59425 Pondera County Weed Department, 8 Airport Rd. Conrad, MT 59425
2.	OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:	DNRC-480 Large Volume Aggregate and Rock Mining Permit
3.	ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	1. Deny the request 2. Locate an alternative route 3. Approve the proposed route

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LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY OFFICE

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS N = Not Present or No Impact will occur. Y = Impacts may occur (explain below)
4.	GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compactable or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[Y] This proposal will have a maximum surface area disturbance of .82 acres. This area includes the primary mine area, and a reserve area. The access roads, crushing, screening, and product storage areas are already in place. The upper six inches of soil cover will be stripped and stockpiled for reclamation purposes prior to product removal. After the material has been mined, and the volume requirements are satisfied, reclamation will immediately follow. The pit wall will be knocked back and recontoured. Then, the soil will be spread, and a grass seed mix of slender wheat grass, pubescent wheat grass, and alfalfa will be implemented. The ratio will be 40-40-20 at 7 lbs /acre. The seeding method will be broadcast.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
	Noxious weed monitoring and control efforts will be conducted by Pondera County. The DNRC Conrad Field Office will assist in these efforts.
5. 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? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] This proposal will not affect surface or groundwater resources in the area.
6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I air shed)? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] Air Quality will not be affected from the implementation of this project.
7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[Y] This proposal will permanently alter approximately .82 acres. The current topography is a flat pediment dominated by Stipa Comota. After the area has been mined, there will be a slight depression within the pediment, and the plant community will be dominated by Agropyron species.
8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] The implementation of this project will not have an adverse affect on area wildlife, birds, or fish.
9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] There are no federally listed or threatened species or habitat present on this tract.
10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	[N] There are no identifiable historical or archeological sites that were observed during the field review. This particular tract has been mined for several decades and the files revealed no significant finds.
11. 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? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] There are no prominent topographic features within the proposed project area.
12. 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? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] There will not be demands on the areas resources from the implementation of this proposal.
13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of other private, state or federal current actions w/n the analysis area, or from future proposed state actions that are under MEPA review (scoping) or permitting review by any state agency w/n the analysis area?	[Y] There is another contractor who pays storage for several gravel stockpiles within this tract. This proposal is well clear of these stockpiles and should not interfere with a secondary hauling contractor.

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	[Y] The implementation of this project will improve county roads just in time for an anticipated heavy harvest year.
15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	[Y] This proposal will definitely help area agricultural producers by improving transportation routes.
16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number. Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[Y] This project will create some contracting jobs for the crushing and screening phase of the project. Estimated number would be 3 to 6 employees.
17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[Y] There will be some tax revenue generated from the implementation of this project through wages, fuel, etc.
18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] This proposal will not increase the demand for government services to the area.
19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	[N] There are no government zoning or management plans in affect along this proposed route.
20. 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? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] There are no wilderness areas along this proposed route.
21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] This proposal will not add to the population of the area.
22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities' possible?	[N] This proposal will not affect any native lifestyle or traditions.
23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	[N] This proposal will not affect the cultural uniqueness of the area.
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES: Is there a potential for other future uses for easement area other than for current management? Is future use hypothetical? What is the estimated return to the trust. Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[Y] This proposal will generate approximately $7,500.00 to the trust. Cumulative impacts are somewhat of a concern as a result of this action in terms of noxious weed generation. Without implementing an excellent weed control system on this tract, this area could be a primary source for spreading future weed infestations. However, DNRC field personnel monitor this area fairly regular, and between DNRC's efforts, combined with Pondera County weed personnel, noxious weed control for this tract is in excellent hands.

EA Checklist Prepared By: Sam R. Olson (signature) L.U.S. Date: 8-5-04

Name Title

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	
26. SIGN4IFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	

27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis:

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

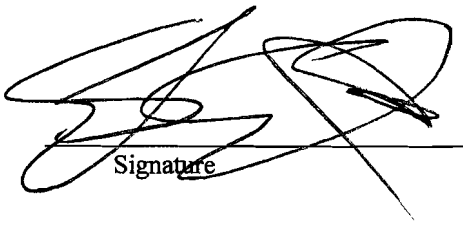
EA Checklist Approved By: See attached Approval Sheet

Name Title

Signature Date

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Approve gravel permit G-1406-04.
26. SIGN4IFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	The proposed gravel pit is a part of an old gravel pit. Pit size is estimated to be .78 acres. All top soil will be stripped and stockpiled and used for site reclamation. No archaeological sites are present in the project area. All disturbed area will be recontoured and reseeded with permanent vegetation following mining activities. The school trust will receive a royalty payment of $0.75 per yard of material removed.
27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis: [ ] EIS [ ] More Detailed EA [X] No Further Analysis	

EA Checklist Approved By: Erik Eneboe (Name) Conrad Unit Manager - CLO (Title)



Signature

August 24, 2004
Date

NOTE: Aggregate Seam is Estimated to Average 8' Thickness: All Calculations Are based on An 8' Cut:

PERMIT AREA PC1:

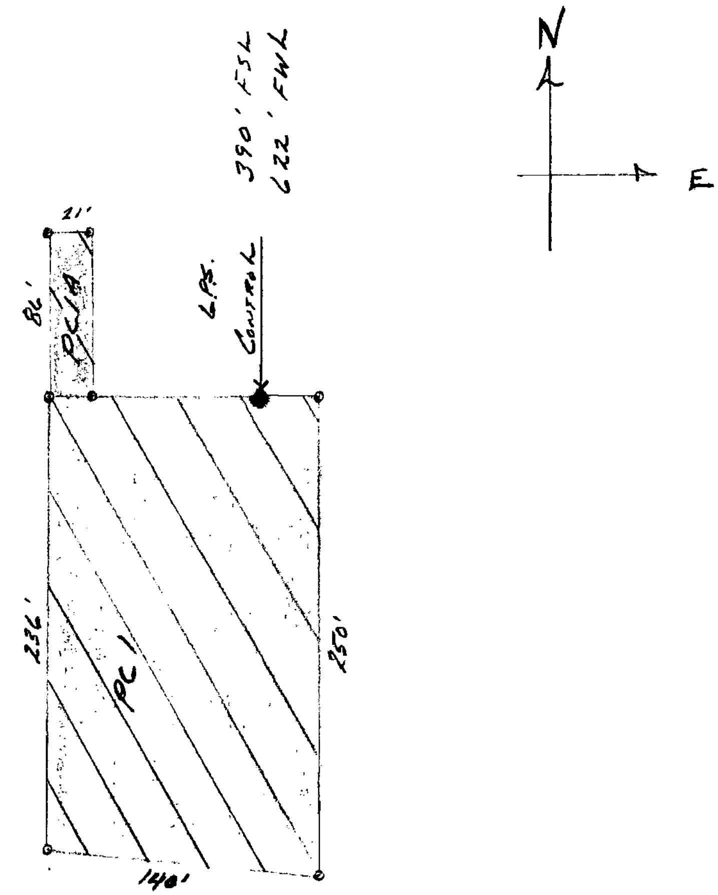
Blocked Area: 10,080 yd^3

Surface Area Disturbance: .78 Acres

PERMIT AREA PC1A: 'Reserve'

Blocked Area: 535 yd^3

Surface Area Disturbance: .041 Acres

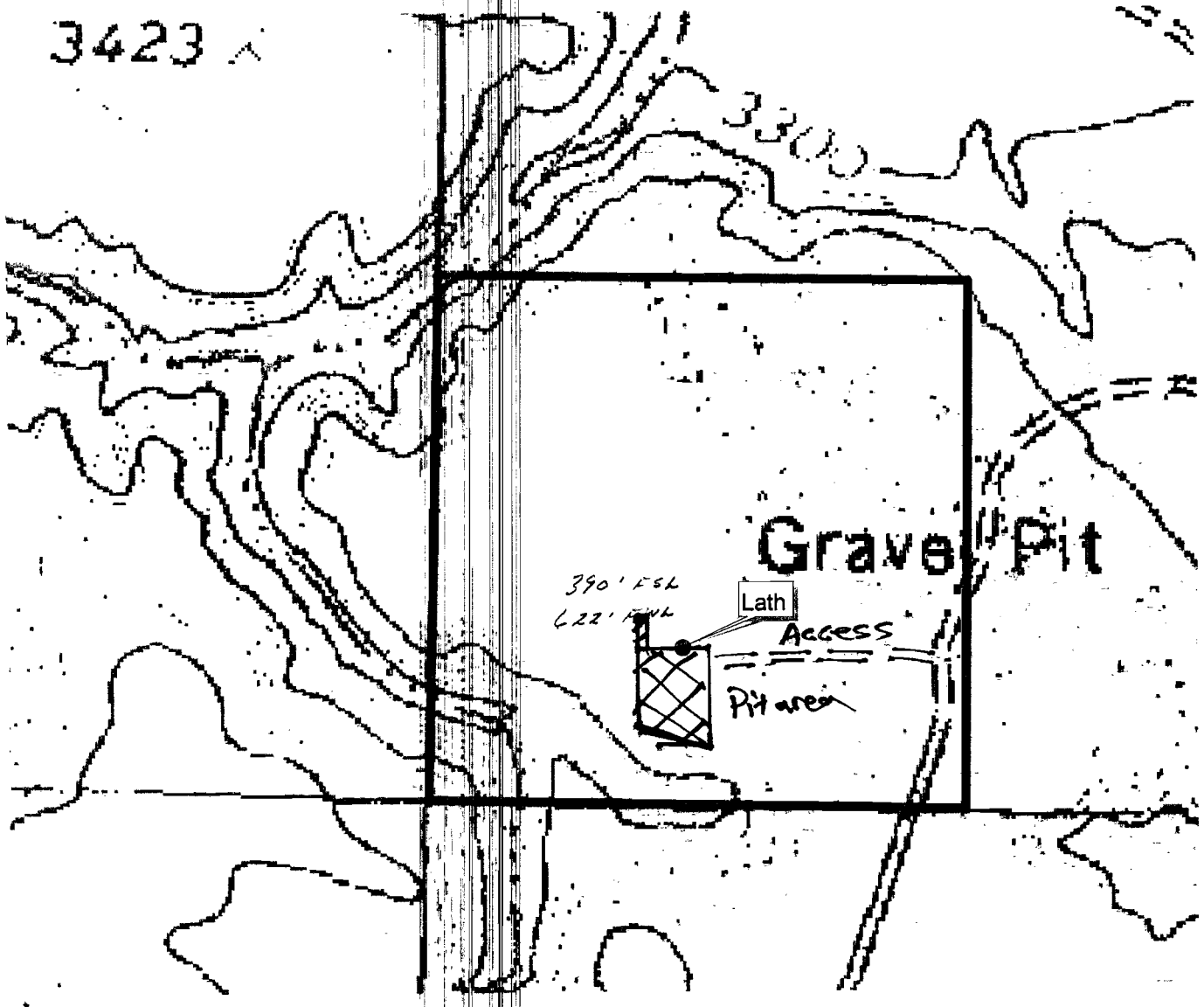


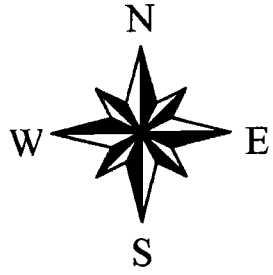
LETZ PIT: T29N R2W SEC 26 SWSW

PONDERA COUNTY

SCALE 1" = 100'

Pondera County Pit
T29N, R2W, Sec 26





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