

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

SITE NAME: Pelican

APPLICANT: Riverside Contracting

LOCATION: NW of Sec 29, T9S, R22E

COUNTY: Carbon

PROPOSED ACTION: Riverside Contracting proposes to mine and crush 150,000 yards of gravel from a 25-acre site. They would also run an asphalt plant. The site is 2 miles north of the Wyoming border and about 9 miles south of Belfry. Access to the proposed site (Riverside site) would be from the adjacent two county roads. The Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone is 150 to 500 feet to the east across one county road. The northern 1-acre portion of the Riverside site has been previously mined and not fully reclaimed. There is another old pit approximately 1.5-acre in size north of the Riverside site that is not reclaimed.

The site would be reclaimed to a post mine land use of rangeland by November 2010. The reclamation bond is \$82,245.

A: Significant Unavoidable Impacts B: Insignificant as a result of conditioned mitigation C: Insignificant as proposed
L: Long term Impacts S: Short Term Impacts

		POTENTIAL IMPACTS					
		A	B	C	L	S	EXPLANATION
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT							
1. <u>TOPOGRAPHY</u>				X	X		<p>The site would be located on a flat, alluvial terrace about 30 feet above and 150-500 feet to the west of the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone. The north part of the Riverside site has been mined and graded to form a shallow 3-acre depression in the landscape (Pit 1). Pit 1 has not been soiled or seeded. Only about 1 acre is included in the Riverside area. Adjacent to and north of Pit 1 is another 1.5 acre pit (Pit 2). Pit 2 is an active pit. Neither Pit 1 nor Pit 2 has been permitted. Riverside's proposed plan would daylight the 25-acre Riverside site into the 3-acre Pit 1.</p> <p>A permanent depression would be left after mining. The site, including Pit 1, would contain runoff which would quickly infiltrate. No pond would be left.</p>
2. <u>GEOLOGY</u> ; Stability				X	X		<p>The site's alluvium consists of recent gravels, cobbles and boulders that have washed down from the Big Horns and the Beartooth Plateau in Wyoming. Sedimentary mudstones and siltstones from about 70 million years ago form the surrounding basin. The mined alluvium would be permanently removed from the environment.</p>
3. <u>SOILS</u> ; Quality, Distribution				X		X	<p>Since the site has been worked by the river, topsoil and overburden are quite variable. Surface gravel is visible in some areas. The south and central areas have been flood irrigated for hay and have up to 12 inches of rocky silt or clay loam soil, and possibly another 12 inches of overburden. But this does not extend uniformly across the 25 acres. The average material replacement depth would be approximately 9 inches. Riverside might also use reject fines for reclamation material.</p> <p>The two pre-existing pits, outside the proposed permitted area,</p>

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											<p>would be reclaimed. Almost no soil was salvaged from these pits. Some reject fines may be used for this purpose. Also, the landowner has been stockpiling material from a local beet farm to be used for topsoil.</p> <p>Soil salvage would result in minimal adverse impacts to the soil resource.</p> <p>This is the driest part of Montana because it is in the rain shadow of the Beartooths and the Big Horns. The 58-year average annual precipitation at Belfry is 6.88 inches according to the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's Western Regional Climate Center.</p>
4. <u>WATER</u> ; Quality; Quantity; Distribution								X		X	<p>The closest surface water is the Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone. It is between 150 and 500 feet away on the other side of the county road and about 30 feet lower in elevation. The site would daylight into Pit 1, about an acre of which is in Riverside's proposed 25-acre site. Runoff from the Riverside permit area would be contained in Pit 1, which is a self-contained bowl. Any runoff that might occur would not reach the river.</p> <p>Pit 2 is mainly self-contained with a berm between it and the river. It drains toward Pit 1.</p> <p>The irrigation ditch that runs through the Riverside site has not been used for years and would not be replaced once it was disturbed by the proposed operation.</p> <p>No springs are visible on the site. No groundwater seeps into Pit 1. The water table across the river is at 16 feet below the ground surface. The water table at the proposed site probably is 30 to 40 feet deep since the site is about 30 feet higher in elevation. No groundwater would be impacted.</p> <p>There would be no significant impact to water quality or quantity from mining.</p>
5. <u>AIR</u> ; Quality								X		X	<p>The crusher and asphalt plants are permitted by the air quality section of DEQ. Fugitive dust would be controlled with the use of water trucks. Air quality impact would be minimal.</p>
6. <u>UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE, or LIMITED</u> environmental resources											<p>None. There are no unique or endangered species on site. Thirty years ago a prairie dog town was located across the river several miles away. It is no longer there. This site does not provide sage grouse habitat. No special species would be impacted.</p>
BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT											
1. <u>VEGETATION</u> ; quantity, quality, species								X		X	<p>This site is a very dry, plains rangeland. The native ground in the southeast corner of the site has no grass and only a few sagebrush plants. The irrigated field has about 70 percent wheatgrass coverage. Mining would have minimal impact because of the short duration of the project, previous disturbance that would be reclaimed, and the overall small</p>

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											<p>amount of disturbance. All affected areas would be seeded with a dryland grass mix.</p> <p>Although mostly outside the proposed permit boundary, Riverside has agreed to reclaim both Pit 1 and Pit 2. The landowner has stockpiled some topsoil from the beet farmer across the river to use on the unpermitted areas.</p> <p>Reclamation would increase grass productivity a little because the previously disturbed area would also be reclaimed.</p>
2. <u>TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN, and AQUATIC</u> ; species and habitats								X		X	<p>Deer and a few antelope use the area to the west but there is no sign that they occupy the proposed site. A few rabbits cross the road from the south to graze and then return to their burrows in the deserted ranch yard. There are a few sagebrush but they do not provide any special sage grouse habitat. Mining would have minimal impact because part of the area has been disturbed. In addition, the area to be disturbed is relatively small and it would only be disturbed for a short time.</p>
3. <u>AGRICULTURE</u> ; grazing, crops Production								X		X	<p>Mining would result in a minimal short term reduction of vegetation for grazing.</p>
HUMAN ENVIRONMENT											
1. <u>SOCIAL</u> ; structures and mores								X		X	
2. <u>CULTURAL</u> uniqueness/diversity								X		X	
3. <u>POPULATION</u> ; quantity/diversity								X		X	
4. <u>HOUSING</u> ; quantity/distribution								X		X	
5. <u>HUMAN HEALTH & SAFETY</u>								X		X	
6. <u>COMMUNITY & PERSONAL INCOME</u>								X		X	
7. <u>EMPLOYMENT</u> ; quantity, distribution								X		X	
8. <u>TAX BASE</u> ; state/local tax revenue								X		X	
9. <u>GOVERNMENT SERVICES</u> ; demand								X		X	
10. <u>INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL and AGRICULTURAL</u> activities								X		X	
11. <u>HISTORICAL and ARCHAEOLOGICAL</u>								X		X	<p>A walkover of the area did not reveal any artifacts or signs of occupation. No signs were evident at depth in the previously disturbed area. If during operations resources were to be discovered, activities would be halted, or possibly temporarily moved to another area until SHPO was contacted and the importance of the site was determined.</p>
12. <u>AESTHETICS</u>								X		X	<p>The landowner's trailer is about 350 feet from the Riverside site and adjacent to Pit 2. Two farm homes are located across the river about 1,000 feet from the proposed pit. These homes are</p>

POTENTIAL IMPACTS						
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						in an area of fairly high background noise because they are between the river and Highway 72. Crusher noise impact would be short term. Truck traffic for the duration of the project would have to go past the two houses.
13. <u>ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS</u> and <u>GOALS</u> ; local and regional			X		X	
14. <u>DEMANDS</u> on <u>ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES</u> of land, water, air and energy			X		X	
15. <u>TRANSPORTATION</u> ; networks and traffic flows			X		X	Material from the site would be used for reconstruction of Highway 72 between Belfry and the Wyoming line. It is the major route into Wyoming in this part of the state. There would be heavy truck traffic on the county road and the highway for about 2 months.

REGULATORY IMPACT ON PRIVATE PROPERTY: The analysis done 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 so as to constitute a taking.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: Landowner, Natural Heritage Program, State Historic Preservation Office

OTHER GROUPS OR AGENCIES CONTACTED OR WHICH MAY HAVE OVERLAPPING JURISDICTION: Air Resources Management Bureau, Mining Safety and Health, Carbon County Commissioners, Carbon County Weed Board

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED: Denial

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING PREPARATION OF AN EIS: Unnecessary, No Significant Impacts

APPROVED BY: _____ DATE: _____

Prepared by Jo Stephen, 2/07