

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
COAL PROGRAM**

**SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
July 25, 2007**

Proponent: Big Sky Mine
Site Name: Area B
Location: Approximately 10 miles south of Colstrip, MT
County: Rosebud
Permit #: Permit No. 88004B; MR 05-04-01B
Preparer: Shannon Downey, Vegetation Specialist

Type and Purpose of Action: Big Sky Mine has submitted a revised revegetation plan that details changes in seed mixes, new treatments, acres assigned to various revegetation treatments, and other minor changes in methods for revegetation in Area B. These proposed changes are being submitted as a request for a minor revision to the existing permit for Area B.

Impact Analysis:

Seed Mix Changes – Changes to seed mixes are minor, consisting of elimination of one or two introduced species, or clarifications on identification of species. The overall impact of these changes is small, but positive, insofar as native species are preferred over introduced ones.

New Treatments – A new treatment (E) is designed to replicate ponderosa pine/ thin breaks sites and to take advantage of areas where trees and shrubs are voluntarily establishing. The overall impact of the addition of this treatment is positive (or less negative) because the approved plan has no provision for reestablishment of breaks vegetation.

Acreage Assigned to Treatments – The attached table documents the differences between the currently approved revegetation plan and the proposed plan; it also compares the planned acres of different vegetation types between pre-mining and the current and proposed revegetation plans.

Much of the change is due to avoiding disturbance and preserving the native vegetation intact on over 1000 acres that were originally approved for disturbance. Additional changes come from the incorporation of the new breaks reclamation treatment and adjustments that bring the post-mine vegetation closer to the pre-mine distribution. Overall, the impact of these changes is positive (less negative) compared to the currently approved revegetation plan, as vegetative diversity across the landscape will be greater under the proposed revegetation plan than under the current plan.

SIGNATURE

DATE

Big Sky Mine Area B
Revised Revegetation Plan
Permit No. 88004B; MR 05-04-01B

Vegetation Type	RECLAMATION ACRES				Net Difference	VEGETATION ACRES		
	CURRENT	Preserved	PROPOSED Treated	Total		Pre-mining	Current Change from Pre-mining	Proposed Change from Pre-mining
STCO grassland	2115	324				978		
Sidehill grassland/sumac	264	149				506		
Rangeland w/ shrubs	2379	473	1658	2131	-248	1484	895	647
Big sage, silver sage	311	311				592		
Mesophytic shrubs & deciduous trees	142	11				332		
Drainage	453	322	192	514	61	924	-471	-410
Riparian grass	74	26	39	65	-9	49	25	16
Ponderosa pine / shrub-grassland	360	143	110	253	-107	327	33	-74
Breaks (natural regen of shrubs & conifers)	0	33	229	262	262	221	-221	41
Pond impoundments	0	0	9	9	9		N/A	9
Agriculture & miscellaneous	0	85	0	85	85	181	-181	-96
Totals	3266	1082	2237	3319	53	3186	80	133

Note: acreage inconsistencies of <5% result from differences in measurement capabilities from 1987 to 2006
Net difference is between approved reclamation and proposed treated plus preserved acres for each vegetation type