

# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**PROPONENT:** Riverside Contracting, Inc.

**SITE NAME:** Baldik Site

**LOCATION:** Sections 10 and 15, T33N, R23E

**COUNTY:** Blaine

**TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION:** Proponent has applied for a 29.7-acre opencut mine permit area where they propose removing 63,000 cy of gravel. Processing equipment would include a screen, crusher, and asphalt plant. The tentative final reclamation date is 11/2009. The application contains all items required by the Act and Rules. Proponent commits to properly conducting opencut operations and would be legally bound by the permit to reclaim the site to a postmining land use of grassland.

A = significant unavoidable impacts. B = insignificant as a result of conditioned mitigation. C = insignificant as proposed.

	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIVE MEASURES					
	A	B	C	LONG TERM	SHORT TERM	EXPLANATION
<b>PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</b>						
1. <u>TOPOGRAPHY</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The mine area is located on the valley floor of ephemeral Wayne Creek. The mine material processing and stockpiling area is located on the first low bench above Wayne Creek. Gravel removal to a maximum depth of 7 feet would alter the topography by lowering the surface and creating new slopes. All surfaces would be graded to 3:1 or flatter and blended into the surrounding topography and drainageways.
2. <u>GEOLOGY</u> : stability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Department reviewed potential impacts due to the removal of mine material and determined that the site can be reclaimed to a stable condition.  The three proposed mine areas are located next to ephemeral Wayne Creek. A 205-foot stretch of creek channel goes between two of the proposed mine areas. The Plan of Operation calls for an undisturbed 50-foot wide buffer between the channel and mine areas. This should be sufficient to maintain the integrity of the Wayne Creek channel when it flows in response to snowmelt or rain.
3. <u>SOILS</u> : quality, distribution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The average soil thickness is 12 inches and the average overburden thickness is minimal. Soil would be stripped from mine-level areas and placed on areas prepared for resoiling or stockpiled for later reclamation use. Soil stripped from facility-level areas would be evenly replaced on those areas.
4. <u>WATER</u> : quality, quantity; distribution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The mine areas are located on the valley floor of a large ephemeral drainageway. It does not appear that ground and surface water are factors that need to be addressed. Channel buffers are discussed in 2 above. There are no water wells in or near the site that could be affected by this operation.
5. <u>AIR</u> : quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	There would be some degradation of air quality while operations are in progress. Proponent must comply with state air quality regulations.
6. <u>UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE, OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	None identified.

<b>BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT</b>						
1. <u>TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN, AND AQUATIC SPECIES AND HABITATS</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Montana Natural Heritage Program reports the burrowing owl and greater sage-grouse as species of special concern in the vicinity of the proposed operation. There was no indication during the site inspection that these species occupy the relatively small proposed disturbance area.</p> <p>Burrowing Owls can be identified from other owl species by the fact that they live in the ground. This species is migratory in the northern portion of its range, which includes Montana. They winter south of the U.S.-Mexico border. Burrowing owls are found in open grassland habitat where they nest and roost in abandoned animal burrows. The opencut operation would disturb a relatively small area. Abundant similar habitat exists in the area.</p> <p>The greater sage-grouse is the largest of Montana's grouse. In Montana, it ranges primarily in the southwestern and eastern portions of the state. This species does not migrate. Sagebrush is its preferred habitat. The opencut operation would disturb a relatively small area. Abundant similar habitat exists in the area.</p>
2. <u>VEGETATION</u> : quantity, quality, species	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>The proposed disturbance area consists of native rangeland. The Montana Natural Heritage Program reports no species of special concern. No noxious weeds were observed on or next to the proposed permit area. Proponent contacted the local weed district about the proposed operation and is in compliance with their requirements.</p>
3. <u>AGRICULTURE</u> : grazing, crops, production	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>A small area of native rangeland would be temporarily out of production. This would not substantially impact local agriculture. The site would be reclaimed to grassland.</p>
<b>HUMAN ENVIRONMENT</b>						
1. <u>SOCIAL</u> : structures, mores	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
2. <u>CULTURAL</u> : uniqueness, diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
3. <u>POPULATION</u> : quantity, diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
4. <u>HOUSING</u> : quantity, distribution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
5. <u>HUMAN HEALTH &amp; SAFETY</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No problems are anticipated. Restricted hours of operation are not needed at this remote site.
6. <u>COMMUNITY &amp; PERSONAL INCOME</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
7. <u>EMPLOYMENT</u> : quantity, distribution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
8. <u>TAX BASE</u> : local, state tax revenue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
9. <u>GOVERNMENT SERVICES</u> : demand	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
10. <u>INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL, &amp; AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

11. <u>HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No resources were identified during the premine inspection performed by Gar C. Wood and Associates, Archaeological Consultants.
12. <u>AESTHETICS</u> : noise, visual	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The site is in a remote location. There are no nearby residences.
13. <u>ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS</u> : local, regional	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Proponent contacted the local zoning authority about the proposed operation and is in compliance with local zoning regulations.
14. <u>DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES</u> : land, water, air, energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
15. <u>TRANSPORTATION</u> : networks, traffic flows	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Proponent would use rural Highway 241 to transport mine material to project sites. This activity would not substantially affect local traffic.

**ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:** The Department would deny an incomplete application or one that does not comply with the Act and Rules. The proponent could then submit a modified application or submit an application for another site.

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT:** Agencies and individuals involved in the process included the Montana Natural Heritage Program, State Historic Preservation Office, local zoning authority, county weed control board, and landowner.

**OTHER GROUPS OR AGENCIES CONTACTED OR WHICH MAY HAVE OVERLAPPING JURISDICTION:** DEQ's Air Resources Management Bureau regarding air quality, DEQ's Water Protection Bureau regarding water discharge, DNRC's Water Rights Bureau regarding water rights, and MSHA regarding mine safety.

**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.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:** No further analysis

**INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS CONTRIBUTING TO THIS EA:** None

Approved By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

Prepared by: Mark Carlstrom