

**CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

<b>Project Name:</b>	Renew Decorative Rock Permits #G-1398-04, & G-1399-04
<b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b>	January 1, 2008
<b>Proponent:</b>	Rocky Mountain Stone – Dave Olmstead – Owner/ Operator
<b>Location:</b>	Sec. 2, T6N, R15E, and Sec. 36, T7N, R15E
<b>County:</b>	Wheatland County
<b>Trust:</b>	Common Schools

**I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION**

Proponent is requesting renewal of 2 leases to remove Decorative Rock from State Land. The permits allow the removal of Decorative Rock from the surface of State Lands in the permitted area.

**II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

**1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:**

*Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.*

Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Rocky Mtn Stone – Dave Olmstead, Surface Lessee of State Lease # 7726- Jim Lane, Surface Lessee of State Lease # 6348 – Bill Jones

**2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:**

MT DEQ – Small Miner's Exclusion Statement (SMES). No other governmental agencies have jurisdiction over this project.

**3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:**

Alternative A (No Action) – Under this alternative, the State would not renew the expiring permits to remove Decorative Rock.

Alternative B (the Proposed Action) – Renew 2 expiring permits to remove Decorative Rock.

**III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

**4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:**

*Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.*

There are no fragile, compactable or unstable soils present. There are no unusual geological features. Removal of surface stone will permanently alter the area. Removal of the surface rock in the proposal area has resulted in increased forage production, decreased runoff, increased infiltration, and improved access for livestock.

Reclamation considerations are specified in the Permit to remove Decorative Rock.

No indirect or cumulative effects are anticipated.

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**5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:**

*Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.*

There are no surface water resources present in the proposal area. Groundwater resources will not be impacted by this type of mining activity.

No direct, indirect or cumulative effects are anticipated.

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**6. AIR QUALITY:**

*What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.*

No pollutants will be produced by this type of activity. Some particulates may be produced by truck activity on existing county roads. Very little dust is generated by the actual mining activity.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to air quality are anticipated.

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**7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:**

*What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.*

There are no rare plants or cover types present. Natural revegetation will occur throughout most of the disturbed areas. If necessary, the disturbed areas will be reseeded to a native seed mixture detailed in the Permit Stipulations.

No indirect or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

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**8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:**

*Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.*

The area is not considered critical wildlife habitat. However, these tracts provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species including mule deer, and pronghorn antelope, predators (coyote, fox, and badger), upland game birds (sharp tail grouse, Hungarian partridge), other non-game mammals, raptors and various songbirds.

The proposal does not include any land use change which would yield changes to the wildlife habitat. The proposed action will not impact wildlife forage, cover, or traveling corridors. Nor will this action change the juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to wildlife habitat are anticipated.

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**9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:**

*Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.*

No specific on-site observations of Threatened or Endangered species have been recorded and no important habitat has been identified on the state lands. A review of Natural Resource Information System (NRIS) for Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) was conducted. No Sage-grouse leks are located on State Land in the proposal area. An potentially active lek is located on private land approximately ½ mile from State Land. All mining activity will be at least ½ mile from the lek. The mining activity on the proposal area will have no significant impact on this lek.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources are anticipated.

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**10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

*Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.*

There are no known archeological, paleontological, or historical resources present. If any are located during the course of the mining activity; the proponent is required to notify the Lewistown Unit Office immediately.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to archeological, paleontological, or historical resources are anticipated.

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**11. AESTHETICS:**

*Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.*

These tracts are located in a rural agricultural area. There are no prominent topographic features. There are no populated or scenic areas nearby. The proposed project will not produce significant increased light or noise levels. The state land does not provide any unique scenic qualities not also provided on adjacent private lands.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to aesthetics are anticipated.

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**12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:**

*Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.*

Decorative Rock is a limited resource unique to this area. There are no activities in the area that will affect this project. Proponent's proposal is to remove 2000 tons of rock from each of 2 areas for a total of 4000 tons.

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**13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:**

*List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.*

There are no other studies, projects or plans on this tract.

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<b>IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i></li><li>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i></li><li>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i></li></ul> |
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**14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

*Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.*

No impacts to human health and safety would occur as a result of the proposal. Health and safety risks associated with this type of mining activity are considered "occupational hazards".

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**15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:**

*Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.*

Commercial and Agricultural industries will be affected. The Decorative Rock has a wholesale value of \$180 to over \$400 per ton. Livestock grazing in the area may be disrupted for short periods of time.

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**16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:**

*Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.*

The proposal would have no effect on quantity and distribution of employment.

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**17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:**

*Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.*

No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to the local and state tax base are anticipated.

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**18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:**

*Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services*

There will be a limited increase in traffic due to the project. The impacts will not be significant.

All state and private land are under the County Coop wildfire protection program. The project will not change fire protections in the area.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to the demand for government services are anticipated.

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**19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:**

*List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.*

The DEQ will issue a Small Miner's Exclusion Statement (SMES) for this project. The proponent has submitted a Plan of Operations as required by DEQ to obtain the SMES. The SMES, Plan of Operations, and the Permits all identify the proponent's responsibilities concerning the removal of Decorative Rock from State Lands.

There are no zoning or other agency management plans affecting these lands.

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**20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:**

*Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.*

These tracts are accessible to the public and used for antelope hunting. There are no wilderness areas nearby.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts to the access and quality of recreational activities are anticipated.

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**21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:**

*Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing*

The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments.

No direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts are anticipated.

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**22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:**

*Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.*

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

**23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:**

*How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?*

The State Trust lands in this proposal are currently managed for grazing. The State lands are generally indistinguishable from the adjacent private lands, with no unique quality.

The proposed project would not directly, indirectly, or cumulatively impact cultural uniqueness or diversity.

**24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:**

*Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.*

The proponent has agreed to a set fee for the removal of Decorative Rock at the rate of \$25/ton. If the proponent removes the proposed 4000 tons, the revenue to the trust would equal \$100,000. It is anticipated the total tonnage will be significantly less than 4000 tons.

The proposed project would not directly, indirectly, or cumulatively impact economics or social circumstances.

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Bill Creamer
	<b>Title:</b> Land Use Specialist, Lewistown Unit, Northeastern Land Office
<b>Signature:</b>	<i>[Signature]</i> <b>Date:</b> 3/24/08

**V. FINDING**

**25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:**

I have selected the Proposed Action - Alternative B, recommend the Permits to remove Decorative Rock be renewed for the proponent, Rocky Mountain Stone.

**26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:**

I have evaluated the comments received and potential environment affects and have determined that there will be no significant negative environmental impacts would as a result of the proposed project. The tract does not have any unique characteristics, critical habitat or environmental conditions. Minimal negative impacts are expected with this type of mining. The conditions of the Permits and the Special Stipulations attached will protect the Trust resources on these State Lands.

The revenue generated by this activity is a substantial benefit to the trust.

**27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

EIS     
 More Detailed EA     
 No Further Analysis

<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Barny D. Smith
	<b>Title:</b> Lewistown Unit Manager, Northeastern Land Office
<b>Signature:</b>	<i>[Signature]</i> <b>Date:</b> 3/24/08