

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
MANY LAKES EAST
BRIST GRAVEL SITE**

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is required under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). An EA functions to identify, disclose, and analyze the impacts of a proposed action—in this case the addition of area to a permitted opencut mine site. This document may disclose impacts that have no legislatively required mitigation measures, or over which there is no regulatory authority.

The state law that regulates gravel mining operations in Montana is the Opencut Mining Act. This law and the rules adopted thereunder place operational guidance and limitations on a project during its lifetime, and provides for the reclamation of land affected by opencut mining operations.

Approval or denial of the application will be based on a determination of whether or not the proposed operation complies with the Opencut Mining Act and the rules adopted thereunder--not on the popularity of the project.

PROPONENT: Many Lakes East, LLP

PROJECT NAME: Opencut Gravel Mining – Brist Site Amendment #1

LOCATION: SW¼ NE¼ Section 31, T28N, R23W **COUNTY:** Flathead

PERSON PREPARING EA: Rod Samdahl

E.A. COMPLETED: 07/14/06
(Date)

TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION:

The applicant proposes to amend his permit to mine, crush and haul an additional 20,000 cubic yards of gravel from an existing pit located 4.5 miles northeast of Marion. The site is an older gravel pit, which has been operated by both Flathead County and the prior landowner, Glen Brist. The site is a gravel outwash deposit in the foothills of the Salish Mountain Range at approximately 3920 feet, MSL where groundwater lies well below the ground surface. The site is being mined into a bank 40 feet high in some places, in an area where the topsoil averages 6” to 8” of rocky clay loam. It would be reclaimed to grasses following mining. The slopes of the reclaimed area would be reduced to 3:1 or flatter and the floor would be graded fairly flat, daylighting out to the south. The site would be reclaimed by December 2012.

A: Significant Unavoidable Impacts. B: Insignificant as a result of conditioned mitigation. C: Insignificant as proposed.

				POTENTIAL IMPACTS		
	A	B	C	LONG TERM	SHORT TERM	AMPLIFICATION
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT						
1. <u>TOPOGRAPHY</u>			X	X		Mining would continue to permanently alter the topography, but reclamation would level and smooth the site and grasses would be planted onto the back slopes.
2. <u>GEOLOGY</u> ; Stability						No effect on geology.
3. <u>SOILS</u> ; Quality, Distribution			X		X	Soils would be stripped, saved and replaced after mining is finished.
4. <u>WATER</u> ; Quality, Quantity; Distribution			X		X	The operation would not affect ground or surface waters including the nearby Hodge Creek. The direction of future mining would be toward the northeast, away from the creek.
5. <u>AIR</u> ; Quality			X		X	Some deterioration of air quality would occur, but episodes would be infrequent. Dust would be controlled around the site with water truck.
6. <u>UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE, or LIMITED</u> environmental resources						No unique, endangered, fragile or limited species or habitat are known at this site.
BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT						
1. <u>TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN, and AQUATIC</u> ; species and habitats			X		X	Wildlife displaced during active mining would return following reclamation.
2. <u>VEGETATION</u> ; Quantity, quality, species			X		X	Existing pasture and forest would be replanted into grasses of a compatible type.
3. <u>AGRICULTURE</u> ; grazing, crops, production			X		X	Some grassland and forest would be temporarily taken out of production, but would be replanted with grasses.
				POTENTIAL IMPACTS		
	A	B	C	LONG TERM	SHORT TERM	AMPLIFICATION
HUMAN ENVIRONMENT						
1. <u>SOCIAL</u> , structures and mores						No social impacts are anticipated.
2. <u>CULTURAL</u> ; Uniqueness, diversity						No unique or diversified cultural values exist.
3. <u>POPULATION</u> ; quantity and diversity						No effect on the population is anticipated.
4. <u>HOUSING</u> ; quantity and distribution						No effects are anticipated on housing.
5. <u>HUMAN HEALTH & SAFETY</u>			X		X	Some dust and additional traffic may be generated at the site but the operator must comply with existing traffic and air quality laws.
6. <u>COMMUNITY & PERSONAL INCOME</u>			X		X	The landowner may receive additional income from this operation.
7. <u>EMPLOYMENT</u> ; quantity and distribution			X		X	No additional employees would be hired to assist in daily operations.
8. <u>TAX BASE</u> ; local and state tax revenue			X		X	Additional taxes may be generated for the state and county as aggregates are hauled and sold.

9. <u>GOVERNMENT SERVICES</u> ; demand			X	X	The site would be monitored through its permit life along with other sites in the area.
10. <u>INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL</u> and <u>AGRICULTURAL</u> activities			X	X	The site would be removed from pasture and ranch use, and used commercially until reclamation when it would be reclaimed to grazing land.
11. <u>HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL</u>					No historical, cultural or archaeological values are present.
12. <u>AESTHETICS</u>			X	X	The site sits back 800 feet from North Ashley lake Road and is visible to the general public.
13. <u>ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS</u> and <u>GOALS</u> ; local and regional					There are no known land use plans for this site.
14. <u>DEMANDS</u> on <u>ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES</u> of land, water, air and energy					There are no unusual demands on environmental resources.
15. <u>TRANSPORTATION</u> ; networks and traffic flows			X	X	There would be some additional traffic added as this gravel pit accesses the county roads.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED: **The Department would deny an incomplete application or one that does not comply with the Act or 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 authorities, county weed control board, and the landowner.**

OTHER GROUPS OR AGENCIES CONTACTED OR WHICH MAY HAVE OVERLAPPING JURISDICTION: **DEQ's Air Resources Management Bureau regarding air quality and MSHA regarding mine safety.**

REGULATORY IMPACT ON THE APPLICANT'S 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.**

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

RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS: **No further analysis is required.**

Approved By _____
(Signature)

(Date)

