

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR MINOR REVISION
COAL AND URANIUM PROGRAM
MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**

COMPANY NAME: Big Sky Coal Company

DATE: January 25, 2010

OPERATING PERMIT#: 83004CR

MR#: 09-04-04A

LOCATION: Near Colstrip, MT

Type and Purpose of Action:

Big Sky has requested approval to leave the embankment of a sediment pond in place to serve as a permanent road crossing for the land owner. The sediment pond is no longer needed because the upstream area has been reclaimed and is vegetated. Previously, water storage in the impoundment was controlled by a CMP conduit through the embankment with a vertical riser. Construction work will entail cutting off the riser at current ground level. After construction the embankment will store less than 1 ac-ft.

Potential Impacts and Mitigation Measures:

The action will allow the embankment to remain in place rather than being removed and reclaimed. Because the culvert will restrict flows at higher discharge events there will be some impact on the natural drainage. This is typical of any constructed road crossing. Given the size of the drainage (242 acres), the impact is expected to be relatively minor and should not appreciably affect the natural flow of drainages downstream.

Alternative Actions:

One alternative would be to not approve the request and require the embankment to be removed. While this would minimize the impacts of the embankment on the drainage, additional impacts would result from the construction work need to remove it. There would also be some short term stability issues while the drainage readjusts to the new configuration. In addition, the landowner has a need to cross the drainage and historically moved equipment across the drainage with associated disruption.

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