



Montana Department of  
**ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**

Brian Schweitzer, Governor  
Richard H. Opper, Director

P.O. Box 200901 • Helena, MT 59620-0901 • (406) 444-2544 • [www.deq.mt.gov](http://www.deq.mt.gov)

April 11, 2012

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Documents Section, State Library  
Jim Skinner, Dept. of Transportation

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Pursuant to the Administrative Rules of Montana, 17.4.609, the following Environmental Assessment has been prepared by the Department of Environmental Quality concerning Big Sky Steel & Salvage Inc, MT a proposed private motor vehicle wrecking facility in Billings, Montana.

The purpose of the Environmental Assessment is to inform all interested governmental agencies, public groups or individuals of the proposed action and to determine whether or not the action may have a significant effect on the human environment. This Environmental Assessment will be circulated for a period of **30 days** at which time a decision will be made as to our future action.

If you wish to comment on this proposed action, please do so in writing, within the allotted time.

Sincerely,

Bruce W. Meyer  
Motor Vehicle Recycling & Disposal Program  
(406) 444-2835  
[brmeyer@state.mt.us](mailto:brmeyer@state.mt.us)

Enc: Environmental Assessment for Big Sky Steel & Salvage Inc, MT

c:file

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality licenses and regulates motor vehicle wrecking facilities under the authority of the Motor Vehicle Recycling & Disposal Act (75-10-501, MCA) and Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM 17.50.201).

**Division/Bureau:** Permitting & Compliance \ Waste and Underground Tank Management  
Solid Waste Program \ Motor Vehicle Recycling and Disposal Program

General Comments

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality licenses and regulates motor vehicle wrecking facilities under the authority of the Motor Vehicle Recycling & Disposal Act (75-10-501, MCA) and Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM 17.50.201).

To be eligible for licensing, a proposed wrecking facility must:

- 1) Be in compliance with all existing zoning ordinances on the date the license application is submitted to the department.
- 2) Be capable of being shielded from view of any existing public road. If the license application is approved, the applicant must construct all necessary shielding prior to the issuance of the license and commencement of operation at the facility.
- 3) Not create any adverse environmental impacts.

**Project or Application:** Big Sky Steel & Salvage Inc, MT - A proposed private Motor Vehicle Wrecking facility.

**Description of Project:** Big Sky Steel & Salvage Inc located at 3425 1<sup>st</sup> Ave South, in Billings, Montana, has submitted a motor vehicle wrecking facility license application to this department for review. The proposed motor vehicle wrecking facility will be situated in Yellowstone County. The legal description of the facility is in the Section 3, Township 1 South, and Range 26 East. The facility is approximately 35,600 square feet in size and located at 3425 1<sup>st</sup> Ave South, Billings, MT. BN lease # 40535070.

**Purpose of Proposal:** By obtaining a motor vehicle wrecking facility license, Big Sky Steel & Salvage Inc would be allowed to: (1) Buy, sell, or deal in four or more vehicles per year of a type required to be licensed, for the purpose of wrecking, dismantling, disassembling, or substantially altering the form of the motor vehicle, (2) Buy or sell component parts, in

whole or in part, and deal in second-hand junk vehicles, (3) Purchase wrecked vehicles from insurance companies. Insurance companies are required by state law to sell junk vehicles only to licensed motor vehicle wrecking facilities. This business would provide a commercial source of automotive parts which would provide a cost saving to the consumer, and (4) This business would also recycle all the metal and non-ferrous metals that were not sold to the general public which would conserve energy and natural resources otherwise used to manufacture new automotive parts.

**Benefits of Proposal:** By obtaining a motor vehicle wrecking facility license, Big Sky Steel & Salvage Inc would be allowed to: (1) Purchase junk vehicles from the general public and insurance companies which would therefore keep the community cleaned up; (2) The facility would be required by statute to shield the junk vehicle from public view; (3) The facility would be required to handle all automotive waste in an environmentally safe manner; and (4) This service would conserve energy and natural resources otherwise used to manufacture new parts.

**Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider by the applicant and the Department:**

Alternative #1 considered by the applicant - Not to license and establishes a facility at this location. This would limit public access to used automotive parts and limit the amount of automotive parts for recycling.

Alternative #2 considered by the applicant - To license and establishes a facility at a location other than the one proposed in the license application. This would require the applicant to find and acquire by purchase or lease a different parcel of property for the proposed usage. At the time this application was made the Department was not made aware that any other location was considered.

Alternative #3 - License the site because the applicant would be able to meet the requirements of the Motor Vehicle Recycling & Disposal Program.

**A listing and appropriate evaluation of mitigation, stipulations and other controls enforceable by the agency or another government agency:** Automotive fluids **must be** drained from the vehicles prior to dismantling. All fluids removed from the vehicles must be captured over an impermeable surface, properly containerized, and properly stored for reuse, recycling, or proper disposal. This is a management method intended to alleviate the potential for groundwater contamination. This is a license condition enforceable by the agency.

CFCs (Freon) **must not** be released to the environment. This is a federally enforceable requirement and is enforced by the U.S. EPA.

**Recommendation:** N/A

The department has made the preliminary determination that the applicant is in compliance with the existing zoning ordinances as of the date of the submittal of the application and can effectively shield the proposed facility from all public roads in the area.

The purpose of the Environmental Assessment is to determine if the proposed motor vehicle wrecking facility can be licensed and operated without posing significant adverse environmental impacts by seeking public input.

**If an EIS is needed, and if appropriate, explain the reasons for preparing the EA:** N/A

**If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is an appropriate level of analysis:** Based on the information submitted for review with the license application, it is clear that the facility will handle all automotive fluids as required by law, shield the facility as required by law, and meet all city zoning ordinances. It is the preliminary determination of the department that EA will provide an adequate review for this proposal.

**Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction:** Yellowstone County Commissioners.

**Individuals or groups contributing to this EA:** Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation; United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service; Montana Historical Society, and State Historic Preservation Office.

**EA prepared by** Bruce W. Meyer

**Date:** April 11, 2012

**POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

	Maj	Mod	Min	None	Unkn	Att
1. Terrestrial and Aquatic Life and Habitat			xxx			xxx
2. Water Quality, Quantity, and Distribution			xxx			xxx
3. Geology and Soil Quality, Stability and Moisture			xxx			xxx
4. Vegetation Cover, Quantity and Quality			xxx			xxx
5. Aesthetics				xxx		xxx
6. Air Quality				xxx		
7. Unique, Endangered, Fragile or Limited Environmental Resources				xxx		
8. Demands on Environmental Resources of Water, Air, and Energy				xxx		
9. Historical and Archaeological Sites				xxx		xxx

\*Maj = Major; Mod = Moderate; Min = Minor; Unkn = Unknown; Att = Attached

CUMULATIVE AND SECONDARY IMPACTS: The potential impacts on the physical environment will be minimal because of the proposed management practices. Upon closure of the facility and removal of the junk vehicles the aesthetics of the site will return to their original state.

**POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

	Maj	Mod	Min	None	Unkn	Att
1. Social Structure and Mores				xxx		
2. Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity				xxx		
3. Local and State Tax Base and Tax Revenue			xxx			xxx
4. Agricultural or Industrial Production				xxx		
5. Human Health				xxx		
6. Access to and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities				xxx		
7. Quantity and Distribution of Employment			xxx			xxx
8. Distribution of Population				xxx		
9. Demands for Government Services			xxx			xxx
10. Industrial and Commercial Activities				xxx		
11. Locally Adopted Environmental Plans and Goals				xxx		xxx

\*Maj = Major; Mod = Moderate; Min = Minor; Unkn = Unknown; Att = Attached

CUMULATIVE AND SECONDARY IMPACTS: The impacts will be minor for local and state tax base and tax revenue due to fact the business has been actively running for years. The quantity and distribution of employment will be minor to none because of the fact the business has been actively running for years. The demands for government services will be minor to none and will be covered by county staff and state staff.

# BIG SKY STEEL & SALVAGE INC - ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

## Potential Impacts on Physical Environment

1. Terrestrial & aquatic life habitats
4. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality

The proposed facility is sited right in the city of Billings. This wrecking facility is surrounded by the BN rail yard, Cereal Foods, commercial properties and 1<sup>st</sup> Street. The terrestrial & aquatic habitats are minor to none because the proposed facility is either covered with buildings, or a dirt working surface for the scrap yard. Some of the area is paved or concreted for parking.

The impacts caused by the wrecking facility activities should not be significant to the area's ecosystem since the surrounding area is also developed for various businesses.

2. Water quality, quantity, and distribution

The properties in this area are on wells. The static ground water level in sections 2,3,4,9,10,11 Township 1 S, Range 26 E varies from 37 feet to 2 feet below ground surface (BGS) with an average of static water level of 11.13 feet BGS. The static ground water level in sections 33, 34, 35 Township 1 N, Range 26 E varies from 179 feet to 4.7 feet BGS with an average of static water level of 21.32 feet BGS. This proposed motor vehicle wrecking yard is not expected to have any impacts on the quality, quantity, and distribution of the ground water because of the proposed Management Practices. These practices will include the removal of the automotive fluids over an impermeable pad before the junk vehicles are processed. These auto fluids will be either reused or properly recycled.

3. Geology and soil quality, stability, and moisture

The soils in the vicinity of the site are classified by the U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service as Keiser and Hesper series. These soils are well drained, 0 to 1 percent slope, and more than 80 inches to water table. Waste anti-freeze, gasoline, and lubricating oils contain petroleum distillates, heavy metals, and possibly toxic compounds. If improperly disposed of, can cause surface and groundwater degradation. The applicant proposes to properly reuse or recycle all of the above-named automotive fluids. Some residual lubricating oils and anti-freeze may drip from the vehicles stored at the facility. This residual dripping is not expected to be significant or result in heavy soil accumulations because the junk vehicles will have the fluid removed.

## 5. Aesthetics

The Motor Vehicle Recycling & Disposal Program is mandated by statute to require all Motor Vehicle Wrecking Facilities to shield their junk vehicles from public view.

"Public view" is defined as any point six feet above the surface of the center of a public road from which the junk vehicles can be seen.

The applicant plans to use the buildings on the property to shield the junk vehicles from public view. An onsite evaluation by department personnel determined the buildings would be adequate to meet the shielding requirements of the Motor Vehicle Recycling & Disposal Act.

## 9. Historical and archaeological sites

Based on the information gathered from the State Historic Preservation Office, it was concluded that the proposed facility would have a low likelihood of impacting cultural resources in area.

### **Potential Impacts on Human Environment**

#### 3. Local & state tax base & tax revenue

#### 7. Quantity and distribution of employment

The establishment of the proposed motor vehicle wrecking facility at the proposed location may provide a source of used motor vehicles or component parts for sale to the public. The issuance of a motor vehicle wrecking facility license will allow the applicant to: (1) Buy, sell, or deal in four or more vehicles per year of a type required to be licensed for the purpose of wrecking, dismantling, disassembling, or substantially altering the form of the motor vehicle; (2) Buy or sell component parts, in whole or in part, and deal in second-hand motor vehicle parts; and (3) Purchase wrecked vehicles from insurance companies. Insurance companies are required by state law to sell junk vehicles only to licensed motor vehicle wrecking yards.

The operation of a motor vehicle wrecking facility may create an additional labor requirement and may result in additional employment. This employment and the employment requirements for the support services of this yard may provide a neutral to positive employment impact for the community.

9. Demands for governmental services

The issuance of a motor vehicle wrecking facility license will require administrative and inspection services of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and the Yellowstone County Junk Vehicle Program personnel.

11. Locally adopted environmental plans and goals

The site selection is not the responsibility of Motor Vehicle Recycling & Disposal Program, but rather the applicant.

The establishment of a motor vehicle wrecking facility at this location does **not** conflict with any existing zoning ordinances as certified by Nicole Cromwell AICP, Zoning Coordinator, Yellowstone County, Billings, Montana.

**Effect on Adjoining Landowners and Land Uses**  
**Other Site-Specific Information**

Information gathered for the preparation of this Environmental Assessment reveals that directly adjacent to the proposed location is tracts of other commercial land and one major city street. The location of this wrecking facility should have minor or no impact on the adjoining landowners and land uses because of the management practices that have been noted in this EA.