

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Anderson Gravel Mine Proposed Implementation Date: 4/15/96 Proponent: Sheridan County, 100 West Laural Ave, Plentywood MT 59254

Type and Purpose of Action: The operator has applied for a 2.4-acre gravel site where they propose to salvage all available soil material, remove 12,000 yards of gravel, and reclaim the site to grassland. The estimated date for final reclamation is unknown.

Location and County: About 2.0 miles east and 2.0 miles north of Dagmar in Sheridan County.

N = Not present or insignificant impact.
Y = An impact may occur (explain).

IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
1. TOPOGRAPHY, AND GEOLOGIC AND EDAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS, SUITABILITY, AND STABILITY: Are there unusual geologic features? Are fragile, compactible, or unstable soils present? Is the proposed soil material handling adequate? Are there special mining and reclamation considerations?	N - The site is on the edge of a flat farming area next to a wide, shallow, grassed, ephemeral drainage in a glaciated sedimentary plains area. According to the soil survey, the soil is the Manning coarse sandy loam, 0-4% slopes. This soil has ample soil material for reclamation. The operator has committed to salvaging and replacing all available soil material. There are no special mining and reclamation considerations.
2. WATER RESOURCE LOCATION, QUANTITY, QUALITY, AND PROTECTION: Are surface or ground water resources present? Is there the potential for degradation of water quality or quantity? Could water wells be affected? Are there special mining and reclamation considerations?	N - It does not appear that there are surface or ground water resources or wells in the immediate area that could be affected by this mining operation. There are no special mining and reclamation considerations.
3. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Do air quality regulations apply?	N - Pollutants and particulates will be produced on a temporary basis by mining and reclamation operations. Operators are required to comply with state air quality regulations.

<p>4. PRESENT LAND USE, VEGETATIVE COMPOSITION AND COVER, AND PROPOSED POSTMINING LAND USE: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or vegetative communities present? Are there special mining and reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>N - The area is mostly, if not 100%, crested wheatgrass. The proposed postmining land use is grassland.</p> <p>The Montana Natural Heritage Program reports the occurrence of <i>Cryptantha Fendleri</i> (Fendler's cryptantha, Fendler's cat's-eye). This forb has a global status of G4, apparently secure. It's state status is S1, critically imperiled; however, it's locally common in the two largest sandhill areas in Montana. Because the proposed site is nearly all crested wheatgrass and not sandhills or dune area, the occurrence of this forb on site is unlikely.</p> <p>The Montana Natural Heritage Program reports the occurrence of <i>Scirpus heterochaetus</i> (Slender bulrush). This grass-like plant has a global status of G5, demonstrably secure. It's state status is S1, critically imperiled. It's habitat is marshes and edges of lakes and ponds. Since the proposed site is the edge of a dry bench, the occurrence of this plant on site is nil.</p> <p>The Department will notify the county weed control board about the operation. The operator has committed to controlling any on-site noxious weeds.</p>
<p>5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN, AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by common or rare mammals, birds, fish, or other animal species?</p>	<p>N - There does not appear to be significant use of the area by common or rare species.</p> <p>The Montana Natural Heritage program reports the occurrence of the Piping Plover in the vicinity. This is a shorebird, so it would not likely be dependent on a dry, crested wheatgrass site.</p>
<p>6. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE, OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Species of special concern? Wetlands?</p>	<p>N - The author is not aware of any unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources at or around the site.</p> <p>The Montana Natural Heritage program reports some element occurrences (see above).</p>

<p>7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Has the site been surveyed by a cultural resource professional or paraprofessional? Are any historical or archaeological resources present?</p>	<p>N - A site check revealed no archaeological or historical resources. If such resources are found, the operator has committed to routing the operation around the site of discovery for a reasonable time until salvage can be made, and to promptly notifying the State Historic Preservation Office.</p>
<p>8. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?</p>	<p>N - The site is in a remote farming area. It is not visible from populated or scenic areas. There will not be excessive noise or light.</p>
<p>9. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR, OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect or be affected by the project?</p>	<p>N - There will not be a significant demand or impact on environmental resources or other projects as a result of this operation.</p>
<p>10. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS OR IMPACTS: Are there other studies, plans, or projects on this tract? Will waste disposal be properly handled? Is reclamation guaranteed by a bond?</p>	<p>N - The author is not aware of any other environmental aspects or impacts. The operator has committed to proper waste disposal. Government entities are not required to post bond, but they are required by law to meet the performance standards in their Mined Land Reclamation Contract.</p>

IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
<p>11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?</p>	<p>N - The site is in a remote farming area. The project should not add to the health and safety risks in the area if the operator and landowner manage the site in a responsible manner.</p> <p>The operator is required to comply with OSHA and MSHA regulations.</p>
<p>12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL, AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?</p>	<p>N - The project will not significantly affect industrial, commercial, or agricultural activities in the area.</p>

13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move, or eliminate jobs?	N - The project will not significantly affect the quantity or distribution of employment in the project area.
14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	N - Similar operations in the state have not significantly affected local and state tax revenues.
15. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial changes in road use occur? Will other facilities and services (e.g., fire protection, police, schools) be affected or needed?	N - County trucks will use the county road to haul gravel to various project areas. No other government services should be affected or needed.
16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there federal, state, county, city, tribal, and/or private zoning or management plans in effect?	N - The author is not aware of any other environmental plans or goals. The local zoning authority has been contacted and clearance obtained.
17. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are recreational or wilderness areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?	N - The project does not affect access to or the quality of recreational lands or opportunities in the area. There is minimal recreation potential within the tract.
18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the area's population and require additional housing?	N - The project will not significantly affect the density and distribution of population or housing in the area.
19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	N - The project will not significantly affect the local social structure or mores.
20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	N - The project will not significantly affect the local cultural uniqueness or diversity.
21. OTHER SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	N - The author is not aware of other significant social or economic circumstances.

22. Alternatives Considered: Denial. The owner of the gravel resource would be denied full utilization of his property at this time.

23. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted: Montana Natural Heritage Program, county weed control board, State Historic Preservation Office, and local zoning authority.

