

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Pust and Jorgensen Sites
 Proposed Implementation Date: Ongoing
 Proponent: Richland County, 2140 W Holly, Sidney MT 59270

Type and Purpose of Action: The operator has applied for contracts for adjacent sites that they recently mined. It's estimated that 20,000 cubic yards of gravel were removed during the spring 1996 operation. The operator salvaged soil and proposes to reclaim the sites to rangeland. The estimated date for final reclamation is 2002.

Location and County: SWSE9 and NENE16, 20N, 58E, Richland 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 exceptional mining and reclamation considerations?	N - The sites are on a flat terrace above the Yellowstone River valley floor. The site is located in the glaciated sedimentary plains portion of the state. No unusual geologic features were observed in the area. The face of an old pit shows 1 foot of soil over 3.5 feet of overburden. The operator has committed to salvaging and replacing all available soil material. There are no exceptional mining and reclamation considerations.

<p>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 exceptional mining and reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>N - It does not appear that there are groundwater resources or wells in the immediate area that could be affected by this mining operation.</p> <p>A large irrigation ditch passes along the east side of the sites. Any runoff from the mine sites into this ditch is irrelevant since the water either already contains agricultural wastewater or will be used on fields.</p> <p>There is a 20' deep draw on the west side of the north site that had clear running water in it when checked in May 1996. Runoff from the site could enter this water; however, it is likely that this water is captured by the valley irrigation system and used for agricultural purposes. The operator has committed to operating in a manner that prevents the deterioration of water quality.</p> <p>There are no exceptional mining and reclamation considerations.</p>
<p>3. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Do air quality regulations apply?</p>	<p>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>
<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 exceptional mining and reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>N - The premine vegetation was grassland. The south area was likely idle since it's next to farmland. The north area was likely used for grazing since it's fenced.</p> <p>The proposed postmining land use is grassland.</p> <p>The Montana Natural Heritage Program reports Threelobed Beggarticks along the Yellowstone River which is 2 miles from the site. This is irrelevant since the sites have been disturbed.</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 animals?</p>	<p>N - No common or rare species or evidence of their use of the area were observed during a visit to the sites.</p> <p>The Montana Natural Heritage Program reports Sturgeon Chub, Meadow Jumping Mouse, Great Blue Heron Bird Rookery, and Pallid Sturgeon in the area. This is irrelevant since most of the occurrences are related to the river that's 2 miles away and the sites have been disturbed.</p>
<p>6. UNIQUE, THREATENED, ENDANGERED, OR FRAGILE 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, threatened, endangered, or fragile environmental resources at or around the sites.</p> <p>See 4 AND 5 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 check of the sites 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? What facilities will be on site? Will there be excessive noise or light?</p>	<p>N - The sites are in a rural farming area. It's not visible from populated or scenic areas. There should 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
11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	N - The sites are located in a rural farming area. The projects should not add to the health and safety risks in the area if the operator and landowner manage the site in a responsible manner. The operator is required to comply with OSHA and MSHA regulations.
12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL, AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	N - Industrial, commercial, or agricultural activities in the area will not be significantly affected by the projects.
13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move, or eliminate jobs?	N - The quantity or distribution of employment in the area will not be significantly affected by the projects.
14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	N - Local and state tax revenues have not been significantly affected by similar operations in the state.
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 - Access to or the quality of recreational lands or opportunities in the area will not be significantly affected by the operation. There is minimal recreation potential within the tracts.
18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the area's population and require additional housing?	N - The density and distribution of population or housing in the area will not be significantly affected by the operations.
19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	N - The local social structure or mores will not be significantly affected by the operation.
20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	N - The local cultural uniqueness or diversity will not be significantly affected by the operations.
21. OTHER SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	N - The author is not aware of other significant social or economic circumstances.

