

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Richland County Lois Raaum Scoria Site

Proposed Start Date: 3/97

Proponent: Richland County, 2140 W Holly, Sidney MT 59270

Type and Purpose of Action: The operator has applied for a 40-acre area where they plan to salvage all available soil material, remove scoria in areas where available, grade the sites, replace the soil material, and reclaim the sites to grassland. The estimated date for final reclamation is 2005.

Location and County: About 7.5 miles south of Culbertson in the SWSW26, T27N, R56E, 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
<p>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?</p>	<p>N - The site is on the east side of the Day Creek valley where the hills rise from the valley floor. The 40-acre area consists of undulating hills.</p> <p>The site is in the glaciated, sedimentary plains portion of the state. No unusual geologic features were observed during the site visit.</p> <p>The soils to be disturbed range from typically thin, scoria-derived materials to thicker soils in swales and toes of slopes. The operator has committed to salvaging and replacing all available soil material.</p> <p>There are no exceptional mining and reclamation considerations.</p>
<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 or surface water resources or wells in the immediate area that could be affected by this mining operation.</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 is native rangeland. Scoria outcrops along the tops of the hills, and the soil and vegetation thicken toward the bases of the slopes and in the swales.</p> <p>The proposed postmining land use is rangeland.</p> <p>The Montana Natural Heritage Program reports the same occurrences as for the other sites recently contracted in the area. These elements are birds and fish by the Missouri River, and bats in a couple abandoned coal mines. Neither are affected by this operation.</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 site visit.</p> <p>The Montana Natural Heritage Program reports no element occurrences in the area.</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 site.</p> <p>The Montana Natural Heritage program reports no element occurrences.</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>In a 3/18/97 SHPO letter they state that there is a low likelihood of cultural properties in the area.</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 site is in a rural farming/ranching area and will be difficult to see from the lightly travelled highway.</p> <p>There operation is not likely to generate 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 rural farming/ranching 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 - Industrial, commercial, or agricultural activities in the area will not be significantly affected by the project.</p>
<p>13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move, or eliminate jobs?</p>	<p>N - The quantity or distribution of employment in the area will not be significantly affected by the project.</p>
<p>14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?</p>	<p>N - Local and state tax revenues have not been significantly affected by similar operations in the state.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>N - County trucks will use the highway and various county roads to haul material to various project areas. No other government services should be affected or needed.</p>
<p>16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there federal, state, county, city, tribal, and/or private zoning or management plans in effect?</p>	<p>N - The author is not aware of any other environmental plans or goals. The local zoning authority has been contacted and clearance obtained.</p>

Approved By: Jerry Burke Mine Reclamation Specialist
Name Title

Signature

Date