

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**Project Name:** Hirschy

**Proposed Implementation Date:** Summer 98

**Proponent:** Konitz Contracting, Inc.

**Type and Purpose of Action:** The proponent proposes to mine, crush, stockpile and transport 28,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel from a 4.9 acre site for use on State Highway 43. The site would be reclaimed by recontouring, respreading the topsoil and reseeding the site with grasses. The reclaimed use would be grazing. Reclamation would be completed by the September of 1998. There will be an asphalt plant setup at the location.

**Location:** NE<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>NW<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>, Sec.27 & SE<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>SW<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>, Sec. 22, T2S, R15W

**County:** Beaverhead

**N = Not present or No Impact will occur.**

**Y = Impacts may occur (explain under Potential Impacts).**

<b>IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</b>	
<b>RESOURCE</b>	<b>[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES</b>
<p><b>1. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:</b> Are fragile, compactible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>[N] The proposed operation is located on an area which slopes very gently to the west. The material to be mined is Tertiary valley fill which has been reworked by alluvial action. The site is approximately 2 miles north of Wisdom. The topsoil is a silty loam texture, approximately 12 inches deep. There is no overburden to salvage. The topsoil would be stripped and stockpiled and after regrading would be evenly replaced. Microorganisms should reinvade the soil. There are no special reclamation considerations.</p>
<p><b>2. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:</b> Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?</p>	<p>[N] The depth to the water table is estimated, during periods of high water, to be at 12 feet, as visually measured at an old gravel pit immediately to the south. The proposed operation would be mined to a depth of 10 feet. When reclaimed the excavation would be approximately 3 feet above the high water table. There are no water wells within 1,000 feet of the site. There would be no impact to the groundwater. The nearest surface water is an unnamed intermittent stream to Steel Creek which is approximately 300 feet to the east. Steel Creek is approximately 1,000 feet to the west across State Highway 43. There is also water in the existing unreclaimed gravel pit to the south. Fuel storage tanks would be lined and bermed and be of sufficient size to contain any leaks or spills. The site upon reclamation would be a 7-foot deep depression with 3:1 or flatter slopes in all directions, with a portion of the excavation being daylighted into the existing pit. All storm water would be contained within the depression. There would be no impact to any surface water.</p>

<p><b>3. AIR QUALITY:</b> Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?</p>	<p>[Y] Air quality would be degraded. The proponent would need to get an Air Quality Permit from the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality as processing facilities are involved with the proposed operation.</p>
<p><b>4. VEGETATION COVERS, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:</b> Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>[Y] The vegetation on the site consists mainly of big sage, forbs, bluebunch wheatgrass and fescue. Native species of grasses will be seeded onto the site upon recontouring and retopsoiling. A literature search was done by the Montana National Heritage Program and no rare plants or cover types were identified and none were identified during a ground search.</p>
<p><b>5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:</b> Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p>	<p>[N] Various mammals, birds, and reptiles occasionally traverse the site. According to the Montana Natural Heritage Program Steel Creek supports a population of Montana Arctic Grayling.</p>
<p><b>6. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:</b> Are any federally listed threatened or an endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Species of special concern?</p>	<p>[N] Ground and literature searches were conducted and no threatened or endangered a species or identified habitats were found on the site. There is a manmade wetland in the old gravel pit. The site is in an upland area and is approximately, but this would not be impacted by the proposed operation.</p>
<p><b>7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:</b> Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>[N] A cultural survey was conducted on the site and no cultural resources were found. If the operator of the proposed operation discovers any cultural resources the operation must be routed around the site of discovery for a reasonable amount of time until salvage can be made. The State Historical Preservation Office must be promptly notified.</p>
<p><b>8. AESTHETICS:</b> 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 visible from a Highway 43, but it is a relatively short term operation and will be reclaimed by October of 1998 and reclamation would be concurrent with mining.</p>
<p><b>9. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:</b> Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?</p>	<p>[N]</p>
<p><b>10. IMPACTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:</b> Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?</p>	<p>[N]</p>

**IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION**

<b>RESOURCE</b>	<b>POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES</b>
<b>11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:</b> Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	[Y] There will be increased hazards because of equipment activity and hauling of the sand and gravel. The applicant must comply with OSHA and MSHA regulations however, proper precautions will be taken to avoid accidents.
<b>12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:</b> Will the project add to or alter these activities?	[Y] 4.9 acres would be taken out of grazing until such time as the site is successfully reclaimed.
<b>13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:</b> Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	[N]
<b>14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:</b> Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	[N]
<b>15. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:</b> Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?	[N] The site would require periodic site evaluations, but these will be done in conjunction with other operations in the area.
<b>16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:</b> Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	[N] County Zoning clearance has been obtained.
<b>17. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:</b> Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?	[N]
<b>18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:</b> Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	[N]
<b>19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:</b> Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	[N]

<b>20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:</b> Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	[N]
<b>21. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:</b>	[N]

**22. Alternatives Considered:**

Alternative # 1: 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, State Historic Preservation Office, & Beaverhead County Planning Office & Weed Control District

**24. Other Governmental Agencies with Jurisdiction, List of Permits Needed:** Mine Safety & Health Administration for safety permit; Montana Department of Labor & Industry, Bureau of Safety for safety permit:

**25. Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts:** Impacts are unlikely to be significant on the general environment because of the small amount of disturbance and short duration of the project.

**26. Regulatory Impact on Private Property:** The analysis conducted in response to the Private Property Assessment Act indicates no impact.

**Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis:**

EIS       More Detailed EA       No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Prepared By: Jerry Burke      Title: Program Coordinator, Industrial & Energy Minerals Bureau

Approved By: Steve Welch      Title: Industrial and Energy Minerals Bureau Chief

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Signature

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Date