

# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

9/4/98

Project Name: Beaver Creek Site

Proposed Implementation Date: in progress

Proponent: Hill County Road Department

Type and Purpose of Action: The applicant proposes to amend its existing permit to increase acreage from 1 to 3 and to change the post-mining use from a lake to grazing land. The pit is located 20 miles south of the town of Havre.

The site will result in a pit that is level with the grade of the surrounding pasture and will be reclaimed to pasture after grading the backslopes to at least a 3:1 and replacing all topsoil.

Location: SE<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> NW<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> Section 16, T29N, R16E

County: Hill

N = Not present or No Impact will occur.

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

IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
<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] Up to eight inches of fairly well drained gravelly loam topsoil overlies the glacial sands and gravels. Local terrace slopes demonstrate reasonably good stability, and ripping after activities are complete should alleviate soil compaction. All soil material will be salvaged and stockpiled away from the affected land. Following mining, grading and ripping, the overburden and soils will be replaced, disked and seeded to stabilize the soil and prevent erosion. Microbes are expected to re-colonize the soil.</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>[Y] The Beaver Creek valley, where the mine is located, has a flowing stream in it and prior mining in the area has created depressions and a pond nearby. Groundwater will not be intercepted at this time and no pond is planned. The stream and its channel will not be affected. There are no water wells within 1,000 feet of the site.</p> <p>Any accidental spills or major leaks from equipment operating in the pit will immediately be excavated and removed from the site. Therefore, the potable water is not expected to be adversely impacted.</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 will be degraded, but not further than the existing plan allows and there will be no further increase in particulate matter. Crushers, dozers, loaders and trucking equipment typically cause dusty conditions in disturbed soil sites. Crusher production degrades the air quality but the operator must obtain air quality permits and abide by state air quality regulations.</p> <p>Applicable federal regulations for air quality which are implemented by the state are the Standards of Performance for New Stationary Sources, 40 CFR Part 60, Subpart OOO (Nonmetallic Mineral Processing Plants). Subpart OOO sets an opacity limitation on fugitive dust emissions from the gravel crushing and handling operations.</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] Vegetation consists of native pasture with greenneedle, blue gramma, prairie junegrass, etc, and all will be removed during mining. The ground will be re-planted with grasses capable of being grazed when reclaimed. 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>[Y] Although the area is used primarily for grazing and recreation, it also supports populations of deer, coyotes, raptors, rodents, game and non-game birds, insects and various other animal species. The mine site is frequented by those animals and they will be displaced as the mine expands. The proposed mine is not expected to significantly degrade wildlife populations.</p>
<p><b>6. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:</b> Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Species of special concern?</p>	<p>[N] Site evaluations have not revealed any other endangered or threatened plant or animal species on site that would be significantly impacted.</p>
<p><b>7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:</b> Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>[N] Although there are important cultural values in the general area, this site has been intensively used by modern man, thus destroying much of the integrity of resources that may have existed. A surface reconnaissance did not discover any cultural, historical or archeological resources. If significant resources are found, the operation will be routed around the site of discovery for a reasonable time until salvage can be conducted. The State Historical Preservation Office will 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>[Y] There will be a deterioration of aesthetics while the operation is under way. However, reclamation will leave the site in a landscape condition that is compatible with the surrounding area. There is and has been an alteration of the viewshed as a result of the existing sand and gravel mine and recreation facilities. The site is visible by traffic along the county road and the Beaver Creek recreational area. Floodlights from dark period operations would increase visibility and awareness of the operation.</p> <p>Noise will not increase from present levels when equipment is active. Noise levels are generally within the range of 60 to 90 decibels measured on-site, decreasing with distance. As a comparison, sound levels for ordinary activities such as close conversation at 60 decibels and music from a radio at 70 decibels are considered to be moderate. Levels above 90 decibels are severe, and prolonged exposure can lead to hearing loss.</p> <p>These impacts are intermittent and of relatively short duration but are in addition to the noise created by the increased truck traffic hauling to various projects.</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	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
<b>11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:</b> Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	[Y] Heavy equipment and facilities including crushers, trucks and loaders will create hazards, but the operator must comply with all MSHA and OSHA regulations. The operator will employ proper precautions to avoid accidents.
<b>12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:</b> Will the project add to or alter these activities?	[Y] The acreage listed in the Type and purpose of Action will be taken out of ranching and put into industrial/commercial use. Upon completion of mining, the land will be reclaimed to its prior use.
<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?	[Y] The operation will require periodic site evaluations by DEQ staff. However, these evaluations are usually performed in conjunction with other area operations.
<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]
<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:**

**No Action:** The pit expansion would not be permitted and the landowner would be deprived of revenue from his resources at this time. The county would move to another location and similar impacts would be experienced there.

**Approval of Application as submitted:** The pit would be expanded and reclaimed as requested.

**23. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted:**

Hill County Commissioners, landowner.

**24. Other Governmental Agencies with Jurisdiction, List of Permits Needed:**

Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Air Quality Bureau for crusher permit; Mine Safety and Health Administration for safety permit; Montana Department of Labor & Industry, Bureau of Safety for safety permit.

**25. Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts:**

Impacts of this amendment are unlikely to be significant on the general environment because of the short timeframes the pit will remain un-reclaimed, the size and location of the project, and the lack of human population or significant wildlife species or habitat.

**26. Regulatory impact on private property:** The analysis conducted in response to the Private Property Assessment Act indicates no impact since this Plan of Operations would not require "Special Stipulations" in order to comply with the Opencut Mining Act.

**Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis:**

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Prepared By: Rod Samdahl

Title: Reclamation Specialist

Approved By: Jerry Burke

Title: Supervisor, Opencut Program, IEMB

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Signature

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Date