

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
OPENCUT MINING PROGRAM**

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

EHRET AND SEILER BORROW SITES

PROPONENT: Wickens, Inc.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: SWSE29, T8N, R58E (Ehert)
ESE3, T7N, R58E (Seiler)

IMPLEMENTATION DATE: 8/98

COUNTY: Fallon

DATE FOR COMPLETION OF FINAL RECLAMATION: 11/1998

TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION: Operator has applied for a 5-acre and an 8-acre Mined Land Reclamation Contract where they plan to mine about 150,000 cubic yards of sand borrow from an equal acreage of pit area. Operator has submitted all application materials required under the Opencut Mining Act and Rules And Regulations governing that Act. Operator proposes to properly prepare, mine, and reclaim the site in an environmentally responsible manner. The proposed postmining use is dryland pasture on the Ehert site and CRP on the Seiler site. Operator has posted \$27,197.50 in bond to guarantee reclamation.

N = not applicable or relatively insignificant or temporary impact. Y = relatively significant or long-term impact may occur.

IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
1. LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY, AND GEOLOGIC AND EDAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS, POTENTIAL IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES.	<p>Y - Location and topography. The sites are located next to the north side of the Baker highway in an area of rolling hills that gently slope toward Sandstone Creek some distance to the north. The sites will be graded to a stable condition and blended into the surrounding topography. Because of borrow removal, the topography will be permanently altered. The proposed reclamation would result in the lowering of a portion of two hills.</p> <p>Geologic characteristics. The sites are in the sedimentary plains portion of the state. The sand deposit to be mined ranges from 8 to 15' thick. No significant geological impacts are anticipated.</p> <p>Edaphic characteristics. Soil thickness is plus or minus 6". Overburden consists of sand which is the mineral to be used off site. The plan calls for salvaging all available soil material and using it for site reclamation.</p>
2. SURFACE WATER AND GROUNDWATER RESOURCES INCLUDING LOCATION, QUANTITY, QUALITY, STRUCTURES, AND USES. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS, POTENTIAL IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES.	<p>N - No groundwater is apparent within or around the mine areas. Surface water and groundwater resources should not be affected by the operation. There are no wells in the immediate area. No on-site fuel storage is anticipated. Operator has committed to protecting water resources.</p>
3. AIR QUALITY. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS, POTENTIAL IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES.	<p>N - Pollutants and particulates may be produced on a temporary basis by this operation. Operators are required to comply with state air quality regulations. The sites are relatively small and in a remote location.</p>

<p>4. PAST MINING DISTURBANCE, PRESENT LAND USE AND VEGETATION, PROPOSED POSTMINING LAND USE AND VEGETATION, AND WEED CONTROL. - SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS, POTENTIAL IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES.</p>	<p>N - Past mining disturbance. None.</p> <p>Present land use and vegetation. The areas are used as rangeland. The Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) reports no element occurrences within or near the site.</p> <p>Proposed postmining land use and vegetation. The sites will be reclaimed to rangeland consisting of native grasses.</p> <p>Weed control. Operator has committed to appropriate weed control measures. The county weed control board has been notified of the operation.</p>
<p>5. COMMON AQUATIC, TERRESTRIAL, AND AVIAN HABITATS AND SPECIES. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS, POTENTIAL IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES.</p>	<p>N - The Seiller site is in CRP and the Ehret site consists of basic prairie habitat common in the area.</p>
<p>6. FRAGILE, RARE, THREATENED, OR ENDANGERED HABITAT AND SPECIES. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS, POTENTIAL IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES.</p>	<p>N - None of the mentioned resources are apparent. The MNHP reports no element occurrences within or near the site.</p>
<p>7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS, POTENTIAL IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES.</p>	<p>N - The sites have been professionally surveyed per MDOT requirements. If archeological or historical resources are found during mining and reclamation operations, operator has committed to promptly notifying the State Historic Preservation Office and routing the operation around the site of discovery for a reasonable time until salvage can be made.</p>
<p>8. AESTHETICS. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS, POTENTIAL IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES.</p>	<p>N - Any aesthetic impact will be temporary. The sites are located by a rural highway and not near any residences.</p>
<p>9. EFFECTS ON OTHER NATURAL RESOURCES. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS, POTENTIAL IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES.</p>	<p>N - There should be no impacts on other natural resources.</p>
<p>10. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL OR OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS SUCH AS ROAD CONSTRUCTION AND RECLAMATION, MINERAL STOCKPILE DISPOSITION, WASTE DISPOSAL, AND SPECIAL COMMITMENTS.</p>	<p>N - Only short access roads are needed since the sites are next to the project area. All borrow will be used off site. No stockpiles will remain. All wastes will be properly disposed of. This operation requires no special commitments.</p>

IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
<p>11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY. Will the project add to health and safety risks in the area?</p>	<p>N - Health and safety: This project should not increase health and safety risks in the area if the operator and landowner manage the site in a responsible manner. Operator is required to comply with OSHA and MSHA regulations.</p>
<p>12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL, AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION. Will the project 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 project 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 be affected or needed?</p>	<p>N - The operator will use state roads to haul his product. No other government services should be significantly affected.</p>

16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS. Are federal, state, county, city, tribal, 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 AREAS. Will mining and reclamation activities affect the access to or quality of recreation areas?	N - Access to or the quality of recreational areas will not be affected by the project.
18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING. Will the project add to the area's population and require additional housing?	N - Population or housing density and distribution will not be significantly affected by the project.
19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES. Will the project cause disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities?	N - The local social structure or mores will not be significantly affected by the project.
20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY. Will the project cause a shift in a unique quality of the area?	N - The local cultural uniqueness or diversity will not be significantly affected by the project.
21. OTHER SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES.	N - Other significant social or economic circumstances are not apparent.

22. Alternatives Considered: Denial. The owner of the mineral resource would be denied full utilization of his property at this time. The operator may seek another mineral source.

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

24. Other Governmental Agencies with Jurisdiction, List of Permits (that may be) Needed: Montana Department of Environmental Quality, air quality and storm water discharge permits; United States Department of Labor, safety permit; Montana Department of Labor & Industry, safety permit.

25. Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts: Negative impacts during mining should be insignificant and implementation of the Mining And Reclamation Plan should return this area to an aesthetically pleasing and useful condition.

26. Regulatory Impact on Private Property: The analysis conducted in response to the Private Property Assessment Act indicates no impact. The Department does not plan to deny the application or impose conditions that would restrict the use of private property.

Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis:

EIS More Detailed EA No Further Analysis

EA completed by Mark Carlstrom, Mine Reclamation Specialist, on 9/14/98 (Y/N answers properly listed)

EA approved by Jerry Burke, Opencut Mining Program Supervisor: _____
Signature Date