

# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**Project Name:** Neibauer

**Proposed Implementation Date:** Late winter 1999

**Proponent:** Empire Sand & Gravel Company

**Type and Purpose of Action:** The proponent proposes to mine, crush, stockpile, and transport 46,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel from a 15.7-acre site, for use in overlaying a section of Highway 2 with asphalt. The site would be mined to a depth of 12 feet into the low water table. The reclaimed use would be wetland and pond. The site would be reclaimed by recontouring, retopsoiling the facility and stockpile area and reseeding the site with grasses. The slopes of the pond would be reseeded down to the high water mark. An asphalt plant will be set up at the site. Final reclamation would be completed by June 2000.

**Location:** NE¼, Sec. 20, T33N, R18E **County:** Blaine

**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 their unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p><b>[N]</b> The proposed operation is located in the Milk River alluvial valley in sands and gravels of the Quaternary to Recent geologic age. The proponent would mine to a depth of 12 plus feet below the low water table. The mine area would have all available soil stripped and salvaged. The facility and stockpile areas would have 6 inches of soil material stripped and salvaged. The soil is a sandy loam. The overburden is of a sandy nature, up to 2 feet deep and would be salvaged from the mine area. Soil microbes should recolonize the soils. There are no fragile, compactible, or unstable soils present, unusual geologic features, or 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><b>[N]</b> The Fort Belknap Canal is approximately 1,200 feet south of the site and the Milk river is approximately 2,000 feet. The site would be mined with a hydraulic excavator, frontend loader and/or dozer. The period of low water table is February and March. There would be no discharge from the pond area. There are two wells within 1,000 feet and both belong to the landowner. One of the wells is within the mine area and the landowner has requested that the well be removed. The proponent would submit the necessary paper work to the Montana Dept. of Natural Resources on behalf of the landowner. There are several wells 2,000 feet or more to the south of the proposed operation, according to the Montana Dept. of Natural Resources and Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology. There is no information available on the recorded wells as to depth etc., but there should be no impact to the wells by the proposed operation. Any bulk fuel storage tanks would be lined and bermed and be of sufficient size to contain any leaks or spills. The proponent will not need to obtain a Stormwater Discharge Permit from the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality, but will implement best management practices to prevent any off site erosion or sedimentation.</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><b>[Y]</b> Air quality will be degraded, but the proponent must comply with air quality standards and an Air Quality Permit obtained from the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality for the crusher and asphalt plant.</p>
<p><b>4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:</b> Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p><b>[N]</b> There is no vegetation on the site of the proposed operation as it is a grain field currently in fallow. A literature search was done by the Montana Natural Heritage Program and no rare plants or cover types were identified and none were identified during a ground search.</p>

<b>5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:</b> Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	[N] The site may be utilized to some extent by deer, rodents, and various species of birds.
<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?	[Y] A ground search was conducted and no threatened or endangered species or identified habitats were found on the site. The literature search conducted by the Montana Natural Heritage Program identified the swift fox as present several miles north of the site and may roam down to the north shore of the Milk River. There maybe at least four breeding pairs. It is highly unlikely that this proposed operation would impact the fox due to the lack of suitable habitat on the site and the nearby presence of residences.
<b>7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:</b> Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	[N] A cultural resource ground survey was conducted and no resources were found. Steve Platt of the Montana Dept. of Transportation has given cultural resource clearance on the site. Any cultural resources which would have been present would have been destroyed by agricultural practices.
<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?	[N] The proposed operation is fairly isolated and is of a short term nature with reclamation being completed no later than June of 2000. There is a residence within 350 feet of the proposed operation and this is owned by the landowner and is used occasionally for a bunk house.
<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?	[N]
<b>10. IMPACTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:</b> Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?	[N]

#### 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] There will be increased hazards because of the 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?	[N]
<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 will 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]

