

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Tash

Proposed Implementation Date: June 99

Proponent: A.M. Welles, Inc.

Type and Purpose of Action: The proponent proposes to mine, crush, stockpile and transport up to 120,000 cubic yards of gravel from a 12.0 acre site for a Montana Dept. of Transportation project on Montana Highway 278. There would be an asphalt plant setup at the site. The site would be reclaimed by recontouring, respreading the topsoil and reseeding the site with grasses. The reclaimed use would be grazing.

Location: SE¼SE¼, Sec. 9, NE¼NE¼, Sec. 16 & NW¼NW¼, Sec. 15, T6S, R12W County: Beaverhead

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
1. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compactible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?	[N] The proposed operation is located in sands and gravels deposited during the Tertiary Era. The soil is of a black loamy texture with cobbles up to 24 inches in diameter. The depth of the soil varies in depth from 6 to 14 inches. There are no fragile, compactible or unstable soils present, on unusual geologic features, or special reclamation considerations.
2. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: 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?	[N] There are no water wells within 1,000 feet of the site. There is a seasonal stream to the southwest of the proposed operation and Ames Creek is approximately 900 feet to the northwest of the proposed operation. Neither stream should be impacted. Test holes were dug to a depth of 25 feet and no water was encountered. The site would be mined to a depth of 20 feet. Any leaks or spills of petroleum-based products would be immediately cleaned up and properly disposed of. The design of the proposed operation is such that any runoff would drain inward on the site thus avoiding any off site sedimentation or erosion.
3. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	[Y] Air quality would be degraded, but the proponent must comply with air quality standards, and Air Quality Permits obtained from the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality for the crusher and asphalt plant. A water truck would be onsite to control any dust on the access road and facility area.
4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	[Y] The vegetation in the area of the proposed operation contains big sage, various wheatgrasses, and fescue. Native and non-native grass species would be seeded upon recontouring and retopsoiling but will be different than what is currently growing on the virgin native range. 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.
5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	[N]
6. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Species of special concern?	[N] Ground and literature searches were conducted and no threatened or endangered species or identified habitat were found on the site. There is a spring and a wetland to the southwest and they should not be impacted by the operation. The proposed operation will be conducted to avoid any impacts to the spring and wetland.
7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	[N] A ground survey was conducted 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.

8. AESTHETICS: 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]
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 the project?	[N]
10. IMPACTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?	[N]

IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION	
RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: 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, and proper precautions will be taken to avoid accidents.
12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	[N]
13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	[N]
14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	[N]
15. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: 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.
16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	[N] County Zoning clearance has been obtained. The area of the proposed operation is not zoned.
17. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?	[N]
18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	[N]
19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	[N]
20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	[N]
21. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	[N]

