

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Burnham South

Proposed Implementation Date: Fall 1999

Proponent: Helena Sand & Gravel

Type and Purpose of Action: The proponent proposes to mine, crush, stockpile and transport up to 350,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel from a 16.2-acre site for providing the local area with sand and gravel. The site would be reclaimed to a pond, with slopes and other areas topsoiled and seeded with grasses. The reclaimed use would be a pond for providing the landowner's livestock with water. Reclamation would be completed by September of 2002.

Location: SW¼, Sec. 23, T10N, R3W

County: Lewis & Clark

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>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?</p>	<p>[N] The proposed operation is located on the alluvial valley of Prickly Pear Creek in sand and gravel deposited during the Quaternary era. The area has an average of 12 inches of sandy loamy textured topsoil which would be salvaged and respread after recontouring down to the high water mark of the pond. In places the soil is very rocky. There is no overburden. There are no fragile, compactible or unstable soils present, unusual geologic features, or special reclamation considerations.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>[Y] There are no known water wells within 1,000 feet of the proposed operation. The Helena Valley Irrigation District Canal, which supplies irrigation water to the Helena Valley, borders the northwest corner of this permit area. Prickly Pear Creek flows from east to west along the northern border of the permit area. On the north side of the Helena Valley Irrigation District Canal is a pond, which is the result of past gravel mining. No mining would occur within 100 feet of Prickly Pear Creek. The facility and stockpile area of the proposed operation would border the irrigation canal; there would be no mining activity near the canal. The water table is estimated to be 15 feet below the current ground surface at high water table and 20 feet at low water table. The site would be mined to a maximum depth of 25 feet. The site would not be dewatered, but would be mined with an excavator or dredge. Due the topography of the area no discharge water would reach any state waters. Any leaks or spills of petroleum-based products would be immediately cleaned up and properly disposed of. No fuel would be stored onsite.</p>
<p>3. AIR QUALITY: 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, but the proponent must comply with air quality standards, and Air Quality Permits obtained from the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality for the crusher. Water would be used to control any dust on the access road, crusher and facility area.</p>
<p>4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>[N] The vegetation in the area of the proposed operation contains wheatgrasses and wild rose on the rangeland portion. The rangeland portion e has been cultivated in the past. The remaining area has been recently plowed. The applicant has a weed control plan with the Lewis and Clark County Weed Board. Native and non-native grass species would be seeded upon recontouring and retopsoiling but will be different than what is currently growing on the site. 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>

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 the wetland present in the old gravel pit to the north across the irrigation ditch. This area would not be impacted by the proposed operation.
7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	[N] Modern man has previously impacted the area. Therefore any cultural resources would have been destroyed. 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?	[Y] Acreage would be taken out of pasture/grazing and replaced with a pond.
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]

