

DEQ OPENCUT MINING PROGRAM

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Begger Gravel Site.

Proposed Implementation Date: 1/00.

Proponent: Wibaux County.

Type and Purpose of Action: Proponent has applied for a 23-acre Mined Land Reclamation Permit where they propose to remove 50,000 cubic yards of gravel from a 15-acre pit. Available equipment and a crusher will be used in the operation. Proponent has submitted all application materials required under the Opencut Mining Act and the Rules and Regulations governing the Act. Proponent proposes to properly prepare, mine, and reclaim the site to a postmining land use of grassland. Proponent is legally bound through their reclamation permit with the state to reclaim the site. The estimated date for completion of final reclamation is 11/09.

Location: SWNW 26, T13N, R59E **County:** Wibaux County, Montana.

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>[Y] Geology and Topography. The proposed site is in the sedimentary plains portion of the state. The site is a previously mined low hill located in a rangeland and farming consisting of rolling hills and wide, flat areas.</p> <p>Soils. Because the majority of the site has been disturbed by past mining activity, the native soil material is not available. There is a good vegetative cover over most of the area. The operator has committed to salvaging and stockpiling all available soil-like material for future reclamation use.</p> <p>Removal of material will alter the topography; however, operator is required properly grade the site and blend it into the surrounding topography. There are no unusual geologic features and no 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>[N] Surface Water. It does not appear that surface water is a factor for consideration at this site. The site is located on a high and dry area.</p> <p>Groundwater. It does not appear that groundwater is a factor for consideration at this site. Because the site is located on an isolated high area, the groundwater factor is likely to be insignificant.</p> <p>Wells. No wells were seen within or near the site. The site is on isolated higher ground; therefore, could not affect wells even if they were adjacent to the site.</p> <p>Surface and groundwater resources should not be adversely affected by the operation. Proponent has committed to protecting surface water and groundwater resources.</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>[N] Pollutants and particulates may be produced on a temporary basis by this operation. The scale of the operation will be a relatively small and the site is located in a remote location. Proponent is required to comply with state air quality regulations.</p>

<p>4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY, AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?</p>	<p>[Y] Premining Vegetation. The site is currently self-reclaimed rangeland.</p> <p>Postmining Vegetation. The site will be reclaimed to grassland consisting of several wheatgrasses and a legume.</p> <p>Weed Control. Proponent has committed to appropriate weed control measures. The county weed control district has been notified.</p> <p>The Montana Natural Heritage Program reports no plant element occurrences within or near the site.</p>
<p>5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN, AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds, or fish?</p>	<p>[N] The site consists of common rangeland habitat. A site visit did not reveal extraordinary use by wildlife or use by unique wildlife.</p>
<p>6. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE, OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or an endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Species of special concern?</p>	<p>[N] None of the mentioned resources appear to be present. Similar habitat is abundant in the area. No wetland, riparian, or other less common habitat will be affected.</p> <p>The Montana Natural Heritage Program reports no animal element occurrences within or near the site.</p>
<p>7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological, or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>[N] A walk of the area revealed none of the mentioned resources. If cultural resources are found during mining and reclamation operations, proponent 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: 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] The aesthetic impact will be insignificant due to the small size of the operation and its location in a remote area. There are no nearby residences or high-use areas.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>[N] The operation will not use resources that are limited in the area, and it should not impact or be affected by area activities.</p>
<p>10. IMPACTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are there other studies, plans, or projects on this tract?</p>	<p>[N] Any affect on other environmental resources will be temporary. The operation should not affect any environmental studies.</p>

IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
<p>11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?</p>	<p>[N] This project should not significantly increase health and safety risks in the area if the proponent and landowner manage the operation and site in a responsible manner. Proponent is required to comply with OSHA and MSHA regulations.</p>
<p>12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL, AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?</p>	<p>[N] No significant impacts are anticipated.</p>
<p>13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move, or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.</p>	<p>[N] No significant impacts are anticipated.</p>
<p>14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?</p>	<p>[N] Tax revenues have not been significantly affected by similar projects in the state.</p>

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 proponent will use local roads to distribute their product. No other government services should be significantly affected.
16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	[N] 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 AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?	[N] There are no wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through the site.
18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	[N] No significant impacts are anticipated.
19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	[N] No significant impacts are anticipated.
20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	[N] No significant impacts are anticipated.
21. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	[N] Author is not aware of such circumstances.

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

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

24. Other Governmental Agencies with Jurisdiction, List of Permits That May Be Needed: Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Air and Water Protection Bureaus.

25. Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts: Any impacts should be temporary or relatively insignificant and confined to the general area. 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 Checklist Prepared By: Mark Carlstrom Title: Mine Reclamation Specialist Date: 01/28/00

Approved By: Jerry Burke Title: Opencut Mining Program Supervisor, IEMB

Signature

Date