

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Richards

Proposed Implementation Date: Winter 1999-2000

Proponent: R.E. Miller & Sons

Type and Purpose of Action: The proponent proposes to mine and transport 47,000 cubic yards of borrow material and possibly 6,000 cubic yards of crushed material from a 3.5 acre site for a bridge project on the Burma county road south of Glen. The site would be reclaimed by recontouring, respreading the topsoil and reseeding the site with grasses. The reclaimed uses would be grassland and hay yard. The site would be reclaimed by November 30, 2000.

Location: NE¼, Sec. 25, T4S, R9W

County: Madison

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 a west facing edge of a bench on the east side of the Big Hole River valley approximately 3 miles south of Glen. The east end of the site was previously disturbed by the landowner removing material to create a building site. The soils are approximately 6 inches deep and are of a sandy loam texture. After regrading the soil would be replaced. Microorganisms should invade the soil. There are no fragile, compactible or unstable soils present, no 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>[N] The Garrison Irrigation ditch is approximately 150 feet to the south of the proposed operation. Two 36-inch culverts 30 feet long would be temporarily installed in the ditch to provide access to the site, without going by the landowner's residences. Silt fence would be installed on the upstream and downstream ends of the culverts to prevent fill on the culverts from eroding into the ditch. The Big Hole River is approximately .6 miles to the west.</p> <p>There are 4 wells within 1,000 feet of the proposed operation. These wells are either located on the valley floor or on the bench. Judging from the water wells it is estimated that the water table is between 25 to 50 feet below the elevation of the toe of the bench. The proposed mining will take place into the bench, and not below the valley floor. The site will be mined to the height of the bench (15 feet), which is well above the depth to the water table.</p> <p>No fuel would be stored on site. Best Management Practices would be used to prevent any off site sedimentation or erosion. The proposed operation would not impact groundwater or any surface water sources.</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. If a crusher would be utilized with this proposed operation, an Air Quality Permit would be obtained and water spray bars would be installed and used to control dust. A water truck would be used to control any dust on the haul road and the mine and facility areas.</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] The vegetation on the site consists mainly of club moss, sage, blue grama and prickly pear cactus. Native and non-native species would be seeded on the site after recontouring and retopsoiling. A literature search was done by the Montana National Heritage Program and no</p>

	rare plants or cover types were identified as being present on the site and none were observed 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] The Montana National Heritage Program did a literature search and the ferruginous hawk and arctic grayling were identified as being present in the general area. There is a bald eagle nest approximately 2 miles to the southwest along the Big Hole River. No ferruginous hawk nests or nesting substrate was found during a ground search. The BLM was contacted and there are no ferruginous hawk nests etc. near this area. The Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks was contacted concerning the bald eagle nest and they had no concerns due to the distance the proposed operation is from the nesting site. They also stated that there should be no impact to the arctic grayling due to the fact that the proposed operation would be located approximately .6 miles east of the river and out of the flood plain. A ground search did not reveal any threatened or endangered species or identified habitat or species of special concern. No wetlands are present.
7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	[N] Steve Platt, archaeologist for the Montana Dept. of Transportation did not require a cultural resource survey. 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] This is a temporary operation and final reclamation would be completed by November 30, 2000.
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, 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] There will be a temporary loss of grassland 3.5 acres of land until the site is successfully reclaimed.
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]
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]

22. Alternatives Considered:

Alternative # 1: Denial. Impacts would not occur at this location but, however, the proponent could apply to mine another area and similar impacts may be expected.

23. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted: Montana Natural Heritage Program , Madison County Weed Control District & Planner; Jim Rosco, biologist for the Bureau of Land Management Dillon Resource Area Office; Dennis Flath, biologist & Dick Oswald, fisheries biologist, for the Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks in Bozeman & Dillon & a homeowner who lives next to the proposed operation filled out a Resident Notification Form and is not opposed to the operation.

24. Other Governmental Agencies with Jurisdiction, List of Permits Needed: Mine Safety & Health Administration for safety permit; Montana Department of Labor & Industry, Bureau of Safety for safety permit & Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality for an Air Quality Permit for the possible crusher.

25. Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts: Impacts are unlikely to be significant on the general environment because of the small amount of disturbance and short duration of the project.

26. Regulatory Impact on Private Property: The analysis conducted in response to the Private Property Assessment Act indicates no impact.

Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis:

EIS More Detailed EA No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Prepared By: Jerry Burke Title: Supervisor, Opencut Mining Program, IEMB

Approved By: Steve Welch

Title: Bureau Chief, Industrial & Energy Minerals Bureau

Signature

Date