

# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**Project Name:** Wohlfrom

**Proposed Implementation Date:** Winter 2000

**Proponent:** Fisher Sand & Gravel

**Type and Purpose of Action:** The applicant proposes to mine, crush, stockpile and transport 67,000 cubic yards of sand & gravel from a 19.5 acre site to provide gravel for the reconstruction of State Highway 279. An asphalt plant would be involved with this operation. The site would be reclaimed by recontouring the slopes, and then respreading the topsoil to make the area suitable for pastureland and hay production by June of 2002.

**Location:** SW¼NE¼, Sec. 7, T12N, R5W

**County:** Lewis & Clark

**N = Not present or No Impact will occur.**

**Y = Impacts may occur (explain under Potential Impacts).**

<b>IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</b>	
<b>RESOURCE</b>	<b>[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES</b>
<p><b>1. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:</b> Are fragile, compactible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p><b>[N]</b> The proposed operation is located within the Missouri River valley approximately 1.0 miles NNW of Canyon Creek. The soils on the site vary from a silty sand loam on the proposed facility and stockpile area to a gravelly sandy loam on the proposed mine area. A minimum of 6 inches of soil would be salvaged and stockpiled from the facility and stockpile area and 12 inches of soil would be salvaged and stockpiled from the proposed mine area. There is no overburden to be salvaged from the proposed mine area. After regrading, the soil would be replaced. Microorganisms should reinvade the soil. There are no fragile, compactible or unstable soils present, no 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> Little Prickly Pear Creek is approximately 110 feet to the south of the proposed permitted area. The creek is used for irrigation and watering livestock. There are several irrigation ditches in the area of the proposed facility and stockpile area. The landowner has given permission for the proponent to fill in one of the ditches and it will be reestablished by the landowner after the site is regraded and topsoiled. The static water level at the proposed mine area is estimated to be at 21 feet. 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 (14 feet), which is well above the depth to the water table. According to the landowner, when the hayfield, which would be the facility and stockpile area is irrigated the water table comes to within 3 feet of the surface, normally the water table is 9 feet below the surface. There is an irrigation pivot line on the adjoining property to the south. The pivot when it moves to the south casts water onto the area of the proposed mine site. There are no water wells within 1,000 feet of the proposed operation. Fuel for the proposed operation is stored in a van. Best Management Practices would be used to prevent any off site sedimentation or erosion.</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 would 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. A water truck would be used to control any dust on the stockpile, mine and facility areas.</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>[Y] The vegetation on the proposed facility and stockpile area is smooth brome, orchardgrass, timothy and alfalfa. The mine area has recently been plowed and has no vegetative cover. The landowner has a weed control plan on the site and the area has been certified as being weed free. The Lewis and Clark county Weed District has recommended that the proponent's equipment be pressure washed prior to entering the site. After the site has been regraded and retopsoiled, it would be reseeded with grasses and alfalfa by the landowner during the first appropriate agricultural season. 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>
<p><b>5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:</b> Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p>	<p>[N]</p>
<p><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?</p>	<p>[N] The Montana National Heritage Program did a literature search and the site of the proposed operation was in the area identified as being on the fringe of occupied grizzly bear habitat. Glen Erickson, of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, was contacted and he stated that there have been bears seen in the general area and the general area is in a migratory route, but the proposed operation should have no impact on the grizzly bear. A ground search did not reveal any threatened or endangered species or identified habitat or species of special concern on the site. No wetlands are present.</p>
<p><b>7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:</b> Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>[N] A cultural resource survey was previously done on the site and no 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.</p>
<p><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?</p>	<p>[N] The site is not located on a prominent topographical feature. The operation, as proposed, would be short term for the mining and crushing. The material would be hauled from the site on an as needed basis for the reconstruction of the highways. The site would be fully reclaimed by June of 2002.</p>
<p><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?</p>	<p>[N]</p>
<p><b>10. IMPACTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:</b> Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?</p>	<p>[N]</p>

<p align="center"><b>IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION</b></p>	
<p align="center"><b>RESOURCE</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES</b></p>
<p><b>11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:</b> Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?</p>	<p>[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.</p>
<p><b>12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:</b> Will the project add to or alter these activities?</p>	<p>[N] There will be a temporary loss of pasture and hay on 19.5 acres of land until the site is successfully reclaimed.</p>

<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]
<b>18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:</b> Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	[N]
<b>19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:</b> Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	[N]
<b>20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:</b> Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	[N]
<b>21. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:</b>	[N]

**22. Alternatives Considered:**

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

**23. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted:** Montana Natural Heritage Program & Lewis & Clark County Commissioners and Weed Control District.

**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; Air Quality Bureau of DEQ for air quality permit for the crusher and asphalt plant and the Water Protection Bureau of DEQ for possible Stormwater Permit.

**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

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Signature

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Date