

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Pitsch

Proposed Implementation Date: June 5, 2000

Proponent: Riverside Contracting, Inc.

Type and Purpose of Action: Contractor intends to permit 11.3 acres for use as a facilities area and gravel pit to mine 30,000 cubic yards. A crusher and asphalt plant will be set up in the facilities area. Product will be used for resurfacing highways in the vicinity this summer. The site would be reclaimed by recontouring and respreading the subsoil and topsoil. After reclamation the area would be used to raise grain and hay. The site would be reclaimed by the late June 15, 2001.

Location: W[SE] T4S R35E

County: Big Horn

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 site is located on a high alluvial terrace southwest of Garryowen. Soils are of the [Richfield-Beauvais] series. These deep, silty, clay loam soils developed in water-borne and wind-borne parent materials. The root zone can be 5 feet deep. Precipitation is about 15 inches annually.</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] No surface water features are on site. The Little Big Horn River lies 1 mile to the northeast. The Reno [irrigation] Canal is 1500 feet to the east of the lower terrace. The estimated water table at the site is 150 feet. No wells are listed in the GWIC system for this section, although the ranch buildings [mile away at the foot of the slope are served by well water. These wells will not be impacted.</p> <p>If a fuel tank is located on site, a berm and liner will be placed around it to contain any possible spills.</p> <p>Best Management Practices will be used to insure that runoff and erosion will be minimized.</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] A water truck will be used for dust suppression on site and on the haul road. The crusher is equipped with spray nozzles. The proponent must obtain the proper air quality permits from the Montana Dept. of Environmental Quality for the asphalt plant and crusher and must abide by all air quality laws.</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 site was previously mined and reclaimed. A fine, grain crop is presently occupying the site. An on-site inspection revealed no species of special concern.</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 is used for crop production. Occasionally deer and upland game bird use the site.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>[N] Consultation with the Montana Natural Heritage Program indicated that no species of concern are present.</p>
<p>7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>[N] The site was previously mined and reclaimed. No artifacts have been found. Steve Platt, archeologist for the Montana Department of Transportation, determined that further survey work is unnecessary.</p> <p>Should a resource be uncovered during operations the area would be avoided until an assessment of the discovery could be made. The Montana Historical Preservation Office would be notified immediately.</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>[N] The site is on a prominent terrace and lies about 2000 feet from the Interstate. It will be visible to tourists and others travelling on the highway throughout the summer, but the proposed operation is of a temporary nature and would be reclaimed by June 15, 2001.</p> <p>The site will also be visible to persons visiting the Little Big Horn Battlefield National Monument located about 2 miles to the east of the site.</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]</p>
<p>10. IMPACTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?</p>	<p>[N]</p>
<p>IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION</p>	
<p>RESOURCE</p>	<p>POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES</p>
<p>11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?</p>	<p>[N] The highway resurfacing project will add to the safety of the travelling public after completion.</p>
<p>12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?</p>	<p>[N] A one season loss of agricultural productivity will occur.</p>
<p>13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.</p>	<p>[N] Temporary construction jobs will be created in the area, but no long term effects will occur.</p>
<p>14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?</p>	<p>[N]</p>
<p>15. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?</p>	<p>[N] The major traffic increase might be for ½ mile on the frontage road unless other access to the Interstate is included in the resurfacing plans.</p>
<p>16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?</p>	<p>[N]</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>[N] No recreational areas are on the site. However, entrance to the Little Big Horn National Battlefield is located 3 miles north, and the Monument stretches about 4 miles along the ridges across the river. The Monument is about 2 miles away to the east. Fighting also occurred at this part of the valley bottom. Historical tours are conducted on private and tribal lands east of the interstate.</p> <p>Except that road construction is disruptive, this project will not impact any of these historical sites or activities connected with them.</p>
<p>18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?</p>	<p>[N]</p>
<p>19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?</p>	<p>[N]</p>
<p>20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?</p>	<p>[N]</p>
<p>21. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:</p>	<p>[N]</p>

22. Alternatives Considered: ^ Alternative #1: Denial. The owner of the resource would be denied full utilization of his property at this time.

Alternative #2: Alternate location. Since the road repairs must be conducted, any alternative gravel source would be farther from the project site, thus creating an increased traffic hazard, and more air pollution from dust and haul trucks, and creating more of an adverse impact on tourists and visitors to the historical locations in the area.

23. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted: Montana Natural Heritage Program, State Historic Preservation Office, Big Horn County Commissioners, 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.

25. Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts: Impacts are unlikely to be significant on the general environment because of the small area of disturbance and the 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: Jo Stephen Title: Reclamation Specialist

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

Signature

Date