ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Miles City Stockyard **Proposed Implementation Date:** Nov. 15, 2000
Proponent: American Contractors
Type and Purpose of Action: American Contractors requires 30,000 cu. yds. of borrow material for use on a highway reconstruction job from the Interstate to Miles City. The project would take about 6 months. The site would be reclaimed to a water tank overflow pond for use by the stockyards, holding pens, and grain or hayfield. Reclamation would be completed by July, 1, 2000.
Location: SE¼ Sec 32 T8N R47 E **County:** Custer

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**
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?	**[N]** The site is on the flat alluvial plain of the Yellowstone River near its confluence with the Tongue River. The site is presently used as holding areas for the stockyards. The silty clay soils have been enriched by animal manure during this use.
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?	**[N]** No natural surface water features are located on or near the site. The stockyards well is 60 feet deep. Mining to a depth of 5 feet will not intercept groundwater. The well is used for watering stock in the pens. Water from an overflow/evaporating pond located in the pen area is used to irrigate nearby fields. The reclaimed pond would replace this existing one, and would serve the same function. Test results of the bentonite-enriched soils used as reclaimed pond liner indicate the new pond will not leach water to the groundwater.
3. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	**[N]** Water trucks would be used to suppress dust on site and on construction.
4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	**[N]** This site has been used extensively for holding animals at the stockyards. Vegetation cover is about 25%, and consists mainly of grasses, mustards, and assorted weedy annuals.
5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	**[N]** The site lies at the edge of Miles City. It has been used commercially for years and has no present value to wildlife.
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]** No wetland habitat exists on site. Schweinitz' Flatsedge was located approximately 1 mile to the northwest along the Yellowstone River. No habitat exists on site for this plant. Pallid sturgeon do live in the Yellowstone River. The Montana Natural Heritage Program does not identify any other species of concern were located within 1.5 miles of this site. No activities at this site will impact these areas.
7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	**[N]** The site has been extensively disturbed during the past. During a site visit no surface artifacts were discovered either on site or in the ditches along the county road. If subsurface resources were present, some indication should be indicated on the surface because previous mixing of soil horizons. If a resource were discovered during mining, the operation would be routed around the area for a reasonable length of time until a field check could be made to determine its significance.

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]** The site is located behind the stockyards. Both the sight and sound of the operation would be blocked by those facilities.
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?	**[N]** The reconstruction of the highway will add to traffic safety in the area.
12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	**[Y]** The pond construction at reclamation will aid in irrigation of nearby fields. Replacing the existing pond in the stockyards would add space for holding pens should the landowner desire to expand.
13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	**[Y]** The project would create an unknown number of temporary construction jobs in the area.
14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	**[Y]** Some tax revenue would be generated by the increased business generated by the construction jobs through motel rentals, food and extraneous sales, and income taxes from out-of-state workers.
15. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?	**[N]**
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. This alternative would result in denying the use of a resource to the landowner, and in an increased safety risk to the driving public where the road maintenance would occur.

Alternative 2: Alternate location of the site. Since another pit location would be farther from the proposed use sites of the product, transportation costs and risks would increase unnecessarily from this alternative.

23. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted: Montana Natural Heritage Program, State Historic Preservation Office, 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 [X] No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Prepared By: Jo Stephen Title: Reclamation Specialist

Approved By: Steve Welch Title: Opencut Mining Program Bureau Chief, IEMB

_____ _____

Signature Date