# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

**Project Name:** Bickle **Proposed Implementation Date:** February 1, 2000
**Proponent:** Fallon County
**Type and Purpose of Action:** The county proposes to mine and crush 25,000 cubic yards of scoria to be used for road maintenance in this portion of the county. The site would then be reclaimed for use as rangeland.
**Location:** NENE Sec11 T7N R56E **County:** Fallon

**N = Not present or No Impact will occur.**
**Y = Impacts may occur (explain under Potential Impacts).**

| IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT | |
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| **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? | **[ Y]** The site lies atop a scoria ridge. The largest part of the ridge consists of scoria outcrop. Little to no topsoil is present. Soil depth on the side of the ridge is about 1 inch. The facilities area has about 3 inches topsoil and the same amount of subsoil. With so little topsoil available reestablishing vegetation would be difficult.<br>Since the ridge is solid rock, the highwall would be stable at any angle. The county would slope the highwall to about a 2:1 and would not topsoil it. The soils saved would be placed on the gently sloping 6-acre facilities area to provide a good growth medium there. This reclamation imitates the natural surroundings fairly well. It provides slope stability, vegetated rangeland, and a diverse environment. |
| **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 surface water features exist. Groundwater is approximately 80 feet deep. Mining would proceed to about 20 feet. No impact to any water resource is anticipated. |
| **3. AIR QUALITY:** Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)? | **[ N]** The crusher is equipped with water sprayers and a water truck would be used on the roads to suppress dust during operations. The Air and Waste Management Bureau regulate crusher emissions for compliance with the Clean Air Act. |
| **4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:** Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present? | **[ N]** Vegetation on the ridge is limited to about 5 per cent coverage of sagebrush, yucca, a few grasses and lichens. The facilities area has good rangeland vegetation.<br>After some time the ridge would naturally revegetate to its present condition. The facilities area should be productive within 2 or 3 years, within normal bond release time. |
| **5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:** Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish? | **[ N]** Occasionally deer and antelope play in the area. The ridge provides habitat for rock-dwelling species.<br>These habitats would be reestablished at reclamation. |
| **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 Natural Heritage Program has no listings for endangered or threatened species, or species of concern for either plants or animals in this area. Reclamation would reestablish the existing natural habitats including rocky outcrops that could be used by wandering raptors as perches. |
| **7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:** Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present? | **[ N]** A field reconnaissance did not identify any cultural resources on-site. The State Historical Preservation Office has no listings for the area. However, if a resource were uncovered during operations, activities would be moved to another area for a reasonable length of time until the find could be evaluated. |

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| **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]** Although the site is on a ridge, it is in an isolated location, several miles from the nearest county road or residence. |
| **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 product would be used to maintain county roads. Better roads should decrease traffic hazards and increase the safety of the driving public. |
| **12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:** Will the project add to or alter these activities? | **[ N]** A temporary reduction in rangeland production would occur on 6 acres of the site. This would be restored after reclamation. |
| **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]** |
| **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, Fallon 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; MtDEQ Air Quality Bureau for air quality permits.

**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

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

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Signature Date