

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Big Sky Ranch and Stables

Proposed Implementation Date: August 1, 2000

Proponent: Dawson County

Type and Purpose of Action: Knoll's Ready Mix proposes to mine 48,400 cubic yards of pit run gravel from a 4.7 acre site about 1 mile from Glendive. Gravel has been extracted for many years from the south end of the site. The product would be used for local projects. The site would be reclaimed by November, 2020 for dry land pasture.

Location: W½ NW ¼ Sec 5 T15N R55E

County: Dawson

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 located on top of a hill in the sedimentary plains portion of the state. The soils are of the "Lihen" series. They are sandy and highly permeable, having developed on fans and terraces in the up[lands]. Topsoil ranges from 1 inch to 12 inches deep. Annual precipitation averages 14 inches.
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 are within a half mile of the site. No wells are close by. Since the site lies on top of the hill and mining would only go to a 20-foot depth, no groundwater resources would be impacted.
3. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	[N] A water truck would be available for dust control on-site and on the haul road if it became necessary.
4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	[N] The site is presently used as rangeland. No rare species or cover types were found during a field inspection.
5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	[N] Deer and antelope occasionally roam across the site. Otherwise, the site is used by small mammals, songbirds, etc.
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?	[Y] The Montana Natural Heritage Program no indications that species of special concern are present. No wetlands or other important habitat is present.
7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	[N] The State Historical Preservation Office has no listings for this area. A field inspection did not discover any resources or artifacts, either on the surface, or in ditches or other disturbed areas. However, if a resource were uncovered during operations, activity would be moved to a different area for a reasonable length of time to allow for assessment of the find.
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 on top of a hill overlooking Glendive, with the nearest homes more than 1,000 feet away. The site has been used historically as a gravel pit. Visual or noise impacts would occur to a small degree.
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]
12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	[N] About 4.7 acres of range land production would be lost for the 20-year life of this project.
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] This is a small site with a long life span. The occasional truck traffic generated by this project would be totally insignificant.
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. 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, Dawson County Planning Board

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.

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