

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
September 18, 2000

Project Name: Holt's Site

Proposed Implementation Date: 9/20/99

Proponent: Blahnik Construction, Inc.

Type and Purpose of Action: The applicant proposes to mine, crush, stockpile and transport 14,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel from a shallow, 7 acre pit located 2 miles west of the town of Lolo. A small amount of hot mix will be made at the site on an old facility setup area. The estimated start-up date is September 20, 1999 and will result in a flat-lying pasture that will daylight out to the south. The site will have graded slopes of at least 3:1, be topsoiled and re-seeded back to grass.

Location: SE¼ SW¼ Section 33, T12N, R20W

County: Missoula

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 proposed mine is located on a flat-lying river terrace within the Lolo Creek Valley. The deposit consists of stratified layers of river-worked glacial outwash sand and gravel that covers the deeper bedrock. The site is a pasture area, which drains south and is adjacent to a local irrigation ditch.</p> <p>Topsoil, which is rocky and 6 to 12 inches thick, will be salvaged and stockpiled away from the pit, road and facility area. Following mining, grading and ripping, the soils will be replaced, disked and seeded back to pasture.</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>[Y] The nearest pre-mining surface water is an adjacent irrigation ditch that follows easterly along the north side of the permit, and a small intermittent tributary to Lolo Creek called Sleeman Creek located 1000 feet east of the site. The ditch and creek will not be affected by mining. The bench will be lowered a depth of 6 to 8 feet which will not intercept groundwater.</p> <p>Special precautions will be taken to minimize possible contamination of the groundwater. All bulk fuel and lubricants will be kept outside the site. Portable equipment with fuel tanks such as loaders, trucks and crusher will be in various places within the facility. Any accidental spills or leaks from equipment will be excavated and disposed of. No waste or trash will be disposed of at the site. With these precautions, the quality and quantity of the groundwater should not be adversely impacted.</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>[Y] Air quality will be degraded and there will be an increase in particulate matter. Dozers, loaders, crushers and trucking equipment typically cause dusty conditions in disturbed soil sites. Dust will be controlled around the site by water truck or sprinklers. Crushers and hot plants are regulated for emissions and the equipment used must be tested and approved.</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] There are no known rare or sensitive plants in the site area. Vegetation consists of pasture grasses such as brome, bluegrass and quackgrass. Vegetation covers 80% of the ground and will be removed and planted with species compatible with the proposed reclaimed use.</p>
<p>5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is</p>	<p>[N] Although the area is used primarily for grazing and hay, it also supports populations of whitetail deer, waterfowl, rodents, song birds, coyotes, foxes,</p>

<p>there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p>	<p>raptors, insects and various other animal species. Population numbers for these species is not known. There are rookeries of blue herons and nesting sites of ospreys and bald eagles along Lolo Creek but none were identified at or near the site. The proposed mine is not expected to significantly degrade wildlife populations.</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] The Natural Heritage Program and site evaluations have not revealed any endangered or threatened plant or animal species that would be directly affected. Bald eagles are known to range all along the nearby Bitterroot River Valley, but no nesting sites are known on or near the proposed permit area. No adverse effects are anticipated on the eagles as a result of this proposed action.</p>
<p>7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>[N] Although there are cultural values in the general area, this site has been previously disturbed by modern man, thus destroying the integrity of resources that may have existed. A surface reconnaissance did not discover any cultural, historical or archeological resources. The operator will give appropriate protection to any values or artifacts discovered in the affected area. If significant resources are found, the operation will be routed around the site of discovery for a reasonable time until salvage can be conducted. The State Historical Preservation Office will be promptly notified.</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>[Y] The site is located in a scenic, but not unique area. There will be a temporary deterioration of aesthetics while the operation is under way. However, reclamation will return the area to a visually acceptable landscape.</p> <p>The site is visible by homes in the local area and to traffic along Highway 12. Hours of operation for the site may be anytime 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. However, normal hours are 5 am to 10 pm.</p> <p>Noise levels generated by operating equipment at the pit are generally within the range of 60 to 90 decibels measured on-site, decreasing with distance. As a comparison, sound levels for ordinary activities such as close conversation at 60 decibels and music from a radio at 70 decibels are considered to be moderate. Levels above 90 decibels are severe, and prolonged exposure can lead to hearing loss. There is also noise from loaders and truck traffic hauling to various projects. These impacts are intermittent and of relatively short duration.</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>[Y/N] 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>[Y] Heavy equipment and facilities including scrapers, trucks and loaders will create hazards, but the operator must comply with all MSHA and OSHA regulations. The operator must employ proper precautions to avoid</p>

	<p>accidents. Road signs in cooperation with the MDOT could reduce hazards entering to and from Highway 12.</p> <p>Excessive and prolonged noise and light could increase stress for nearby residents and induce difficulty sleeping, but ongoing operations are not planned for nighttimes. Both of these effects may be considered harmful to human health if the activities are continuous. This proposed operation should not significantly affect human health.</p>
12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	[Y] The acreage listed in the Type and purpose of Action will be taken out of agricultural/grazing and put into industrial/commercial use. Upon completion of mining, the land will be returned to agricultural/grazing .
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?	[Y] The operation will require periodic site evaluations by DEQ staff until such time as the site is successfully reclaimed to the required post-mining use. However, these evaluations are usually performed in conjunction with other area operations.
16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	[Y] City/County zoning clearance has been obtained.
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?	[Y] The area has generally been agricultural, residential and gravel mining in the recent past. Locals will notice a temporary change in the site as gravel is extracted. They will notice equipment working and truck traffic coming and going. Upon reclamation, the site will be reclaimed to its prior use.
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:

A. Denial: The pit would not be permitted and impacts from mining would not occur at this location. The owner of the gravel resource would be denied full utilization of his property at this time.

B. Approval of the application with mitigating conditions: The Plan of Operation has been written with mitigating conditions including water protection, soil salvage and full reclamation.

23. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted: State Historic Preservation Office, Montana Heritage Program, Missoula County Weed Control District, Missoula County Planning for zoning.

24. Other Governmental Agencies with Jurisdiction, List of Permits Needed: Montana Department of Environmental Quality for Air Quality Permit; Mine Safety and Health Administration for safety permit.

25. Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts: Impacts are unlikely to be significant on the general environment because of the scope and location of the project, the lack of significant or threatened wildlife or habitat, and because of the mitigation measures placed in the Plan of Operations.

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: Rod Samdahl Reclamation Specialist
Name Title

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

Signature

Date