

# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

September 25, 2000

**Project Name:** Ksanka Site

**Proposed Implementation Date:** Fall, 1999

**Proponent:** Plum Creek Timber Company

**Type and Purpose of Action:** The applicant proposes to expand its existing three acre site to six acres. Applicant will continue to mine, stockpile, and transport a total of 170,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel from the site located 1 mile southeast of Fortine. The site would not be mined any deeper than the existing depth of 50 feet, but would expand northward from the current pit floor level along a ridgeline. The reclaimed use would be a pasture, potentially after landfilling with log yard waste. The site would be reclaimed by re-contouring, re-topsoiling the mine, facility and stockpile area and reseeded the site with grasses. The slopes of the pit would be reduced to at least 3:1. Reclamation would be completed in approximately October of 2010.

**Location:** NE¼ NE¼, Section 36, T35N, R26W

**County:** Lincoln

**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
<b>1. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:</b> Are fragile, compactible or unstable soils present? Are their unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?	<p>[N] The proposed operation is located in a glacial alluvial valley in sands and gravels of the Quaternary to Recent geologic age. The proponent would mine to a depth of 50 feet which is well above the local high water table, estimated from a water well log to be 107 feet. The new mine area would have all available soil stripped and salvaged. The soil is a gravelly, clayey silt loam. Soil microbes should re-colonize the soils following replacement. There are no fragile, compactible, or unstable soils present, unusual geologic features, or special reclamation considerations. The reclaimed slopes will be reduced to a 3:1 or flatter angle.</p>
<b>2. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:</b> 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>[N] The nearest surface water is Murphy Creek located 1000 feet southwest and Deep Creek located 1000 feet northeast of the site. No water will leave the site. The site is mined with a dozer. There would be no discharge from the pit area. There is a single water well within 1,000 feet belonging to the applicant. The well was drilled 206' deep, has a static water level of 125 feet and a pumping rate of 15 GPM. The mine will not intercept potable water or otherwise effect this well. No bulk fuel storage will be located on site. The proponent will not need to obtain a Stormwater Discharge Permit from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, but will implement best management practices to prevent any off site erosion or sedimentation.</p>
<b>3. AIR QUALITY:</b> Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	<p>[Y] Air quality will not be degraded beyond the existing, approved levels, but the proponent must comply with air quality standards.</p>
<b>4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:</b> Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	<p>[N] Vegetation on the site of the proposed operation consists of Douglas fir, lodgepole pine, pinegrass, kinnikinick, Oregon grape and covers 80% of the ground. No threatened or endangered plants or animals or rare plants or cover types were identified during a ground search.</p>
<b>5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:</b> Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	<p>[N] The site is utilized by deer, bears, elk, small mammals, and various species of raptors and song birds. Exact number for these species are not known. These animals will be locally displaced during heavy activity but will return temporarily during quite periods of work stoppage, and will return permanently following reclamation.</p>
<b>6. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:</b> Are any federally listed threatened or endangered	<p>[Y] A ground search was conducted and no threatened or endangered species or identified habitats were found on the site. The general area is occupied habitat for grizzly bears. It is highly unlikely that this proposed operation</p>

species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Species of special concern?	would impact the bear due to the lack of suitable habitat on the site and the nearby presence of residences.
<b>7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:</b> Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	[N] A cultural resource ground survey and field inspection was conducted and no resources were found.
<b>8. AESTHETICS:</b> Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?	[Y] The proposed operation is located on a hillside along Highway 93 and is very visible to traffic. The project is long termed at this time with reclamation being planned for the year 2010. The pit is visible to residences in the area. No crusher or other types of plants will be operated at the site.
<b>9. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:</b> Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?	[N]
<b>10. IMPACTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:</b> Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?	[N]
<b>IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION</b>	
<b>RESOURCE</b>	<b>POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES</b>
<b>11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:</b> Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	[Y] There will be increased hazards because of the equipment activity and hauling of the sand and gravel. The applicant must comply with OSHA and MSHA regulations however, precautions will be taken to avoid accidents.
<b>12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:</b> Will the project add to or alter these activities?	[Y] The site is currently a pasture which will be taken out of production during mining. Following reclamation, the site will be returned to pasture.
<b>13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:</b> Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	[N]
<b>14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:</b> Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	[N]
<b>15. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:</b> Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?	[N] The site will require periodic site evaluations, but these will be done in conjunction with other operations in the area.
<b>16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:</b> Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	[N]
<b>17. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:</b> Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?	[N]
<b>18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:</b> Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	[N]
<b>19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:</b> Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	[N]
<b>20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:</b> Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	[N]
<b>21. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:</b>	[N]

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

**Alternative # 2:** Approval. As written, the plan contains controls on water protection, soil salvage and dust control.

**23. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted:** None

**24. Other Governmental Agencies with Jurisdiction, List of Permits Needed:** Mine Safety and Health Administration for safety permit.

**25. Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts:** Impacts are unlikely to be significant because of the proposed operation's location and the lack of critical wildlife or plant species or habitats.

**Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis:**

EIS

More Detailed EA

No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Prepared By: Rod Samdahl

Title: Opencut Mining Program Reclamation Specialist, IEMB

Approved By: Jerry Burke

Title: Opencut Mining Program Supervisor, IEMB

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Signature

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Date