

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Gibbs

Proposed Implementation Date: October 1, 2000

Proponent: Dawson County

Type and Purpose of Action: The county proposes to mine 10,000 yards of gravel from a 4.25 acre site. Mining would occur to a depth of 14 feet on a high terrace 2 miles southeast of the Yellowstone River. The product would be used for county road projects in the vicinity. The site would be reclaimed as pasture by the Fall of 2010.

Location: SE of Sec 1 T13N 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
<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 site is located on an old alluvial slope 2 miles southeast of, and several hundred feet above, the Yellowstone River.</p> <p>The soils are probably of the "Lihen" series, consisting of 6 inches of sandy loam overlying 10 feet or more of sandy-silty material. This soil has a low water-holding capacity which makes it a more xeric site.</p> <p>The site has been previously mined. Topsoil has been salvaged and stockpiled at the location shown on the map.</p> <p>Annual precipitation is about 14 inches, most of which falls during May, June and July.</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>[N] No wetlands are present on the site. A small ephemeral swale lies south of the site but there is little evidence that it carries much water. This is probably due to the highly porous soils in the vicinity. The site is sparsely vegetated with sagebrush and bunchgrasses.</p> <p>The plan of operations calls for mining to proceed to a depth of 14 feet in the form of a day-lighting basin draining to the west.</p> <p>It would not be impacted by this project.</p> <p>No groundwater has been intercepted during the operation of this pit over the years. As mining proceeds upslope, groundwater would not be 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>[N] No designated Class I or Class II airsheds exist in the area. A water truck would be available for dust control on-site.</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] The site is presently used as dryland pasture. The 50 percent cover consists of sage, yucca, and grasses. The site would be reclaimed to daylight to the west. Highwall slopes would be no less than 3:1. No rare species or cover types were found during a field inspection, and none were reported in an NRIS search.</p>
<p>5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p>	<p>[N] Because of the poor condition of the open sagebrush habitat, wildlife does not use the site much although deer, coyotes and other plains animals have been observed.</p> <p>The reclaimed site would provide better grazing, but otherwise would have little impact on wildlife.</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 Montana Natural Heritage Program has no listings for the site. The least tern has been sighted along the Yellowstone between Fallon and Glendive, but the proposed site is not suitable habitat for this species.</p> <p>Several aquatic species are also listed as residents of the Yellowstone River. The proposed action would not impact these aquatic species.</p>

<p>7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>[N] The State Historical Preservation Office has no listings for this area. The site has been mined in the past and topsoil stripped just above the present highwall. No evidence was found to indicate that any surface or subsurface cultural resources exist on site. If some resource were discovered, operations would be shifted to another area for a reasonable period of time to allow for assessment of the new find.</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>[N] The site lies several miles from the Yellowstone River or a major road. It is adjacent to the county road. During the time of operations, the site would have visual impacts to travelers on this road. Noise from the operation would be heard from the road.. Noise impacts are expected to be slight.</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>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>[N] During the road construction the increased number of trucks might increase traffic hazards, but decreased speed limits, signing and other precautions would be taken to minimize these hazards.</p>
<p>12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?</p>	<p>[N] The site would be taken out of rangeland production for the 6-month life of the project.</p>
<p>13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.</p>	<p>[N] Most of the product from this operation would be used on road reconstruction project. This means that jobs would move in and out with the road work. Some secondary jobs might be created in local businesses for the life of the project.</p>
<p>14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?</p>	<p>[N] In that construction workers would move into the area for the duration of the job, local establishments such as restaurants, motels, gas stations and food stores would see an increase in sales.</p>
<p>15. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?</p>	<p>[N] Truck traffic generated by this project would impact local residents during peak construction activity and could be annoying to the public, but it would not be dangerous or overburden the county's infrastructure.</p>
<p>16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?</p>	<p>[N]</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>[N] The recreational potential of this site is low because it is private ground. Impacts are not anticipated.</p>
<p>18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?</p>	<p>[N]</p>
<p>19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?</p>	<p>[N]</p>

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 I: Alternate location of the site. Another pit location could be farther from the proposed use sites of the product, and thus would increase transportation costs and risks unnecessarily from this alternative.

Alternative II: Denial. This alternative would result in denying the use of a resource to the landowner.

23. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted: Montana Natural Heritage Program, State Historic Preservation Office, Dawson County Weed Control District, Dawson County Commissioners,

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 and Waste Management 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
 No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Prepared By: Jo Stephen Title: Reclamation Specialist

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

Signature
Date