

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Sackman

Proposed Implementation Date: September 8, 2000

Proponent: Empire Sand & Gravel Co.

Type and Purpose of Action: The company proposes to mine 20,000 yards of borrow material from a 2.0 acre site. Mining would occur to a depth of 10 feet on a terrace one half mile south of the Yellowstone River, and adjacent to Sand Creek. The products would be used for MDOT highway projects in the vicinity. The site would be reclaimed as pasture by the spring of 2001.

Location: SW NE of Sec 35 T12N R50E

County: Prairie

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 a recent alluvial terrace north of the Yellowstone River. The Sand Creek has downcut steeply about 25 feet into the flat terrace. The gully lies along the sites western boundary.</p> <p>The soils are shallow, probably of the "Lambert" series, consisting of 6 inches of sandy loam overlying 10 feet or more of silty material.</p> <p>Annual precipitation is 12 inches to 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. The site is vegetated with sagebrush and bunchgrasses.</p> <p>The plan of operations calls for mining to proceed to a depth of 10 feet in the form of a shallow, internally draining basin.</p> <p>Sand Creek is about 250 feet to the west and about 30 feet below the terrace in elevation. It would not be impacted by this project.</p> <p>No groundwater was intercepted during the digging of test holes. It is assumed that the groundwater level is at the approximate level of Sand Creek, and thus, would not be impacted by mining.</p> <p>Near the mouth of Sand Creek and the Yellowstone about one half mile to the south is a flowing well. Because the operation would not impact either Sand Creek or groundwater, no impact would occur to this well.</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 and on the construction job.</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 and has been extensively grazed. Many plant species are xeric, such as yucca, prickly pear, sagebrush and green needle grass. The site would be reclaimed to a shallow depression with 3:1 or shallower side slopes. The internal drainage on this dry site would help vegetative growth. 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] The site is about 6 miles west of Terry. Because of the open sagebrush habitat, wildlife does not use the site much. The gulch along Sand Creek is much more heavily used. Deer, raccoons, 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. 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 MtDOT conducted a Class III site inspection. Three areas on the brink of the Sand Creek gulch and at the edge of the site, were marked with stakes and orange paint to be avoided. These sites could have been associated with an early homesteader occupation. If some other 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 6 miles west of Terry along the Frontage Road. During the 1+year time of operations, the site would have visual impacts to travelers on this road. Noise from the operation would be heard from the road, but would probably blend in with noise from trucks and other road construction activities beginning next Spring. 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>

IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
<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>

