

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Anderson

Proposed Implementation Date: November 1, 2000

Proponent: Sweetgrass County

Type and Purpose of Action: The county proposes to mine 30,000 yards of weathered sandstone from a 10-acre site. The product would be used for county road projects in the vicinity over the next 2 years. Mining would occur to a depth of 7 feet on 2 ridges separated by a shallow swale. The site would be reclaimed as rangeland by the Fall of 2002.

Location: SW of the SE of Sec 13 T4N R13E **County:** Sweetgrass

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>[Y] The site is located on 2 ridge tops. Elevational change is 60 feet along the ridge line and 20 feet through the swale.</p> <p>The soils non-existent on top of the ridge, and about 6 inches in the swale. Mining would occur mainly on the ridges so almost no soil would be available for reclamation. A very small amount of soil might be salvaged from around the edges of the ridge. Scrapers would run with the direction of the ridge and the highly fractured rock would be loaded into truck for hauling.</p> <p>The landowner requested that disturbance associated with the haul road be kept to a minimum, so topsoil would be rolled to the side and rolled back at reclamation.</p> <p>Annual precipitation is about 15 inches, most of which falls during May, June and July. The site does get good snow cover most years.</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] The nearest surface water is an intermittent stream about 2000 feet to the North. A small swale lies between the 2 ridge tops and will not be mined although it may be traversed when hauling. The plan of operations calls for scalping the top of the ridge up to a depth of 7 feet. No real pit would develop and the disturbance would day-light on all sides.</p> <p>There is no indication that groundwater would be intercepted during the operation .</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. No crusher would be used.</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 ridge tops have about 10 percent cover consisting of sage, grasses, and some grey horsebrush. The site would be reclaimed to daylight on all sides. This area would not revegetate very well because of the lack of topsoil. But it is not productive at this time.</p> <p>No noxious weeds were seen on site; the county would control or eliminate any weeds that should invade the site.</p> <p>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] Wildlife does use the site. Deer, antelope, coyotes, raptors and other plains animals have been observed.</p> <p>Mining 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. No wetlands are present on the site. No species of special concern are present.</p>

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. During a field survey 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 time period to allow for assessment of the new 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 very isolated and is not visible from the nearest county road. Noise from the operation would not be heard from the road either.
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] Several ridges occur in the area that are capped with the same shale and sandstone material.
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] During the times when the county is hauling out of the pit, truck traffic on the county road could create a minor increase in the safety risk.
12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	[N] The site would be taken out of rangeland production for the life of the project.
13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	[N] Most of the product from this operation would be used on county road projects. There would be no impact to employment.
14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	[N] There would be no effect on taxes.
15. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?	[N] Truck traffic generated by this project would impact local residents during construction activity and could be annoying to the public, but it would not be dangerous or overburden the county's infrastructure.
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] The recreational potential of this site is low because it is private ground. Impacts are not anticipated.
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 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, Wibaux County Weed Control District, Wibaux 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