

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PROPONENT: Riverside Contracting, Inc.
LOCATION: NWNE and SWNE7, T31N, R30E

SITE NAME: Darrah
COUNTY: Phillips

TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION: Proponent has submitted an application to the Opencut Mining Program for a 14.5-acre permit to mine about 15,000 cubic yards of gravel from a gravel wash and grassland site next to the ephemeral Assiniboine Creek. The site has been mined and reclaimed in the past. Proponent has submitted all application materials required under the Opencut Mining Act and the Rules adopted thereunder. Proponent proposes to properly prepare the site, remove the mine material, and reclaim the site to a postmining land use of rangeland. Proponent will be legally bound by their permit to reclaim the site.

A = significant unavoidable impacts. B = insignificant as a result of conditioned mitigation. C = insignificant as proposed.

| | POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIVE MEASURES | | | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| | A | B | C | LONG TERM | SHORT TERM | EXPLANATION |
| PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT | | | | | | |
| 1. <u>TOPOGRAPHY</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Removal of gravel to a depth of 5 feet will alter the topography. All surfaces will be graded to 3:1 (horizontal:vertical) or flatter. The site will be graded to blend into the surrounding topography and drainageways. |
| 2. <u>GEOLOGY</u> : stability | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Potential impacts due to the removal of mine material have been reviewed. The Department has determined that the site can be reclaimed to a stable condition. |
| 3. <u>SOILS</u> : quality, distribution | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Soil materials will be salvaged and placed on areas prepared for resoiling, or stockpiled for later reclamation use. The plan states that an average of 6 inches of soil will be stripped and used for site reclamation. |
| 4. <u>WATER</u> : quality, quantity; distribution | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | It appears that surface and ground water will not be affected by this operation. The operator has committed to keeping the excavation at least 50 feet back from the primary creek channel. |
| 5. <u>AIR</u> : quality | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | There would be some degree of air quality degradation while operations are in progress. Operator must comply with state air quality regulations. |
| 6. <u>UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE, OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | None identified. |
| BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT | | | | | | |
| 1. <u>TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN, AND AQUATIC SPECIES AND HABITATS</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The Montana Natural Heritage Program reports one species of special concern in the region—the greater sage-grouse. The proposed operation will be relatively small and short term. It will take place at a site that has been mined and reclaimed in the past. No grouse have been observed at the site during inspections. Abundant similar and better habitat exists in the area. |

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|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 2. <u>VEGETATION</u> : quantity, quality, species | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The Montana Natural Heritage Program reports no species of special concern. Abundant similar habitat exists in the area. |
| 3. <u>AGRICULTURE</u> : grazing, crops, production | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Less than 14.5 acres of rangeland will be taken out of production. This will not substantially impact local agriculture. The site will be reclaimed to grassland and hayland. |
| HUMAN ENVIRONMENT | | | | | | |
| 1. <u>SOCIAL</u> : structures, mores | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 2. <u>CULTURAL</u> : uniqueness, diversity | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 3. <u>POPULATION</u> : quantity, diversity | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 4. <u>HOUSING</u> : quantity, distribution | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 5. <u>HUMAN HEALTH & SAFETY</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 6. <u>COMMUNITY & PERSONAL INCOME</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 7. <u>EMPLOYMENT</u> : quantity, distribution | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 8. <u>TAX BASE</u> : local, state tax revenue | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 9. <u>GOVERNMENT SERVICES</u> : demand | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 10. <u>INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL, & AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 11. <u>HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL</u> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No resources identified. |
| 12. <u>AESTHETICS</u> : noise, visual | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | The site is on the floor of an isolated drainageway. There are no nearby residences. |
| 13. <u>ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS</u> : local, regional | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 14. <u>DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES</u> : land, water, air, energy | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |
| 15. <u>TRANSPORTATION</u> : networks, traffic flows | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Operator will use a county road and perhaps a rural highway to transport mine material to the project area. This traffic will not substantially impact local road use. |

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED: The Department would deny an incomplete application or one that does not comply with the Act and Rules. The proponent could then submit a modified application or submit an application for another site.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: Agencies and individuals involved in the process included the Montana Natural Heritage Program, State Historic Preservation Office, local zoning authority, county weed control board, and landowner.

OTHER GROUPS OR AGENCIES CONTACTED OR WHICH MAY HAVE OVERLAPPING JURISDICTION::
 DEQ's Air Resources Management Bureau regarding air quality, DEQ's Water Protection Bureau regarding water discharge, DNRC's Water Rights Bureau regarding water rights, and MSHA and OSHA regarding mine safety.

REGULATORY IMPACT ON PRIVATE PROPERTY: The analysis done in response to the Private Property Assessment Act indicates no impact. The Department does not plan to deny the application or impose conditions that would restrict the use of private property.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS: NO FURTHER ANALYSIS

INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS CONTRIBUTING TO THIS EA: NONE

Date:

Approved By: _____

(Signature)

Prepared by (name/date): Mark Carlstrom 1/05/06