

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

SITE NAME: Hayne Site  
 LOCATION: SWSE Sec 4 T28N R7W

APPLICANT: Pondera County Road Department  
 COUNTY: Pondera

**PROPOSED ACTION:** Pondera County proposes to mine and crush ~100,000 cu. yds. of gravel from a 5.25 acre native rangeland site. The site is located approximately 1½ miles north of Dupuyer on the west side of Highway 89. The site will daylight into a pre-law gravel pit. All application materials required under the Opencut Mining Act and the Rules adopted thereunder have been submitted. Proponent commits to properly conducting opencut operations and reclaiming the site to a postmining land use of sloped open-face bench, graded pit floor, and livestock winter feed area. Final reclamation to rangeland would be by approximately December 2020.

A: Significant Unavoidable Impacts    B: Insignificant as a result of conditioned mitigation    C: Insignificant as proposed

| POTENTIAL IMPACTS   |   |   |   |           |            |  |
|---|---|---|---|-----------|------------|--|
|   | A | B | C | LONG TERM | SHORT TERM | EXPLANATION  |
| <b>PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</b>   |   |   |   |           |            |  |
| 1. <u>TOPOGRAPHY</u>  |   |   | X | X         |            | Open, large flat with little relief. Approximately 8' deep depression in the topography.   |
| 2. <u>GEOLOGY</u> ; Stability   |   |   | X | X         |            | This area has glacial gravels. Should achieve stable landscape.  |
| 3. <u>SOILS</u> ; Quality, Distribution                                   |   |   | X |           | X          | Approximately 4 inches of soil and no overburden will be stripped, saved and replaced after mining is finished.  |
| 4. <u>WATER</u> ; Quality; Quantity; Distribution                         |   |   | X |           | X          | No evidence of any surface water flow in or within the permit area. The rancher has identified a small seep (no flow even during wet years) down gradient ~ 30 vertical and 1500 horizontal feet below the site. Possible increase of snow accumulation and less wind evaporation within the reclaimed pit area. |
| 5. <u>AIR</u> ; Quality   |   |   | X |           | X          | Some deterioration of air quality during mining and crushing but episodes will be infrequent.  |
| 6. <u>UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE, or LIMITED</u> environmental resources |   |   |   |           |            | None.  |
| <b>BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT</b>   |   |   |   |           |            |  |
| 1. <u>TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN, and AQUATIC</u> ; species and habitats          |   |   | X |           | X          | Grizzly bears were identified by the Montana Natural Heritage Program as a threatened species of concern that could be affected by this operation. Abundant similar habitat exists in the area.  |
| 2. <u>VEGETATION</u> ; quantity, quality, species                         |   |   | X |           | X          | Introduced pasture grasses: mainly brome.  |
| 3. <u>AGRICULTURE</u> ; grazing, crops production                         |   |   | X |           | X          | The site will not be grazed during mining operations.  |
| <b>HUMAN ENVIRONMENT</b>  |   |   |   |           |            |  |
| 1. <u>SOCIAL</u> ; structures and mores                                   |   |   |   |           |            | NA   |
| 2. <u>CULTURAL</u> ; unique, diverse                                      |   |   |   |           |            | None   |

|   | <b>POTENTIAL IMPACTS</b> |   |   |           |            |  |
|---|--------------------------|---|---|-----------|------------|--|
|   | A                        | B | C | LONG TERM | SHORT TERM | EXPLANATION  |
| 3. <u>POPULATION</u> ; quantity, diversity  |                          |   |   |           |            | NA   |
| 4. <u>HOUSING</u> ; quantity and distribution                                       |                          |   |   |           |            | NA   |
| 5. <u>HUMAN HEALTH &amp; SAFETY</u>   |                          |   | X |           | X          | Some additional traffic in the area. The operator would have a private access onto Highway 89. |
| 6. <u>COMMUNITY &amp; PERSONAL INCOME</u>   |                          |   | X |           | X          | May be a small amount of additional income for the landowner and local retail businesses.      |
| 7. <u>EMPLOYMENT</u> ; quantity and distribution                                    |                          |   |   |           |            | No new employees would be hired.   |
| 8. <u>TAX BASE</u> ; local and state tax revenue                                    |                          |   | X |           | X          | Additional taxes may be generated for the state and county as aggregates are hauled and sold.  |
| 9. <u>GOVERNMENT SERVICES</u> ; demand  |                          |   | X |           | X          | The site would be monitored through the life of the permit.                                    |
| 10. <u>INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL</u> and <u>AGRICULTURAL</u> activities                |                          |   | X |           | X          |  |
| 11. <u>HISTORICAL</u> and <u>ARCHAEOLOGICAL</u>                                     |                          |   |   |           |            | None noted during the pre-mine inspection.   |
| 12. <u>AESTHETICS</u>   |                          |   | X |           | X          | Site would be visible from Highway 89.   |
| 13. <u>ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS &amp; GOALS</u> ; local and regional                     |                          |   |   |           |            | No known plans for the area.   |
| 14. <u>DEMANDS</u> on <u>ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES</u> of land, water, air and energy |                          |   |   |           |            | None   |
| 15. <u>TRANSPORTATION</u> ; networks and traffic flows                              |                          |   | X |           | X          | There would be an increase in traffic.   |

**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 and Water Protection Bureaus, DNRC's Water Rights, MSHA and OSHA.

**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 so as to constitute a taking.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:** NO FURTHER ANALYSIS

**INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS CONTRIBUTING TO THIS EA:** NONE

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Prepared by Peter Mahrt