

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PROPONENT: Garfield County
LOCATION: Sections 1, 2, & 12, T21N, R39E

SITE NAME: Coldwell
COUNTY: Garfield

TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION: Proponent submitted a permit application to the Opencut Mining Program for a 4.8-acre scoria mine site. All application materials required under the Opencut Mining Act and the Rules and Regulations thereunder have been submitted. Proponent commits to properly conducting opencut operations and reclaiming the site to a postmining land use of grassland. Proponent would be legally bound by their permit to appropriately conduct opencut operations and properly reclaim the site. The final reclamation date is 11/2011.

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"/>	The proposed site is located on a small hill sitting on and out from a larger hillside. Scoria removal to a maximum depth of 15 feet would alter the topography. The scoria knob would be reduced and the remaining site graded to become an extension of the small saddle that connects the mine area to the larger hillside. All surfaces would be graded to 3h:1v or flatter as required for the postmining land use of grassland. The site would be graded to blend into the surrounding topography.
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 and 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"/>	As is typical for scoria sites, the soil is thin, perhaps 0 to 6 inches thick. Soil materials would be stripped from all areas to be disturbed, and placed on areas prepared for resoiling or stockpiled for later reclamation use. A minimum of 0 inches of overburden and about 3 inches soil would be replaced on mine-level areas.
4. <u>WATER</u> : quality, quantity; distribution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ground water does not appear to be a factor at this site. There are no surface water features or water wells in or near the site.
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 degradation of air quality while operations are in progress. Proponent 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 access road passes by dryland cropland and native range. The main permit area is surrounded by native range. The Montana

						Natural Heritage Program reports the occurrence of the greater sage-grouse. The proposed site is small and would not impact greater sage-grouse habitat. Abundant similar and better habitat exists in the area.
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 vegetation along the access road is dryland cropland and native range. In and around the main permit area it is native range. Reclaimed areas would be seeded to a native grass mix and alfalfa. The Montana Natural Heritage Program reports no species of special concern. Abundant similar and better habitat exists in the area. No noxious weeds were observed on site. Proponent contacted the local weed district and is in compliance with weed district requirements for the proposed opencut operation.
3. <u>AGRICULTURE</u> : grazing, crops, production	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A small area of rangeland would be temporarily out of production. This would not substantially impact local agriculture. The site would be reclaimed to rangeland.
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"/>	No problems are anticipated. Restricted hours of operation are not needed at this site.
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 have been 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 in a remote area. 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"/>	The proposed operation complies with county zoning regulations.
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"/>	The access road runs across private land for about 1 mile, then joins a county road. Hauling activity would not substantially affect transportation in the area.

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 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 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: _____
(Signature)

Prepared by: Mark Carlstrom