

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
PAUL ESLICK  
SMITH SITE, KALISPELL, MONTANA**

This Environmental Assessment (EA) is required under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). An EA functions to identify, disclose, and analyze the impacts of a proposed action. This document may disclose impacts that have no legislatively required mitigation measures, or over which there is no regulatory authority.

The state law that regulates gravel mining operations in Montana is the Opencut Mining Act. This law and the rules adopted thereunder place operational guidance and limitations on a project during its lifetime, and provide for the reclamation of land affected by opencut mining operations.

Approval or denial of the application will be based on a determination of whether or not the proposed operation complies with the Opencut Mining Act, the Rules adopted thereunder, and local laws and regulations--not on the popularity of the project.

**PROPONENT:** Paul Eslick

**PROJECT NAME:** Opencut Topsoil Mining – Smith Site

**LOCATION:** NE¼ NW¼ Section 35, T28N, R20W      **COUNTY:** Flathead

**PERSON PREPARING EA:** Rod Samdahl

**E.A. COMPLETED:** 1/25/07  
(Date)

**TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION:**

The applicant proposes to mine and haul 8,000 cubic yards of soil from this agricultural site located 6 miles north of Bigfork. The site is a flat lying river terrace with deep, rich soils a mile and a half northwest of McGilvray Lake at approximately 2960 feet, MSL, in an area where groundwater lies well below the ground surface. The site would be stripped 10 to 12 inches deep in an area where the topsoil averages 18” of black silty loam. The site would be reclaimed to grass by October 2007.

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	AMPLIFICATION
<b>PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</b>						
1. <u>TOPOGRAPHY</u>			X	X		Mining would not permanently alter the topography, and reclamation would level and return the site to alfalfa.
2. <u>GEOLOGY</u> ; Stability						No effect on Geology.
3. <u>SOILS</u> ; Quality, Distribution			X		X	Soils would be stripped to a depth of 12 inches and sold as a product, which would leave an adequate amount of subsoil for growing grass.
4. <u>WATER</u> ; Quality, Quantity; Distribution			X		X	The operation would not affect ground or surface waters.
5. <u>AIR</u> ; Quality			X		X	Some deterioration of air quality may occur during stripping, but this is a soil site which would be reclaimed soon after stripping.
6. <u>UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE, or LIMITED</u> environmental resources						No unique, endangered, fragile or limited species or habitats are known at this site.
<b>BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT</b>						
1. <u>TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN, and AQUATIC</u> ; species and habitats			X		X	Wildlife displaced during active mining would return following reclamation.
2. <u>VEGETATION</u> ; Quantity, quality, species			X		X	Existing hayfield would be replanted into grass.
3. <u>AGRICULTURE</u> ; grazing, crops, production			X		X	There would be no observable impact on farming.
<b>POTENTIAL IMPACTS</b>						
	A	B	C	LONG TERM	SHORT TERM	AMPLIFICATION
<b>HUMAN ENVIRONMENT</b>						
1. <u>SOCIAL</u> , structures and mores						No Social impacts are anticipated.
2. <u>CULTURAL</u> ; Uniqueness, diversity						No unique or diversified cultural values exist.
3. <u>POPULATION</u> ; quantity and diversity						No effect on the population is anticipated.
4. <u>HOUSING</u> ; quantity and distribution						No effects are anticipated on housing.
5. <u>HUMAN HEALTH &amp; SAFETY</u>			X		X	Some dust and additional traffic may be generated at the site but the operator must comply with existing traffic and air quality laws.
6. <u>COMMUNITY &amp; PERSONAL INCOME</u>			X		X	The landowner may benefit from additional income from this operation.
7. <u>EMPLOYMENT</u> ; quantity and distribution			X		X	No additional employees would be hired to assist in daily operations.
8. <u>TAX BASE</u> ; local and state tax revenue			X		X	Additional taxes may be generated for the state and county as soil is hauled and sold.
9. <u>GOVERNMENT SERVICES</u> ; demand			X		X	The site would be monitored through its permit life along with other sites in the area.

10. <u>INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL and AGRICULTURAL</u> activities			X	X	The site would be used commercially until reclamation when it would be returned to grassland.
11. <u>HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL</u>					No historical, cultural or archaeological values are present.
12. <u>AESTHETICS</u>			X	X	The site sits along Hwy 35 and is visible to the general public.
13. <u>ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS and GOALS</u> ; local and regional					There are no known land use plans for this site.
14. <u>DEMANDS on ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES</u> of land, water, air and energy					There are no unusual demands on environmental resources.
15. <u>TRANSPORTATION</u> ; networks and traffic flows			X	X	There would be some additional traffic added as this soil site is accessed from the highway.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED: **The Department would deny an incomplete application or one that does not comply with the Act or 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 authorities, county weed control board, and the landowner.**

OTHER GROUPS OR AGENCIES CONTACTED OR WHICH MAY HAVE OVERLAPPING JURISDICTION: **MSHA and OSHA regarding mine safety.**

REGULATORY IMPACT ON THE APPLICANT'S 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.**

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

RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS: **No further analysis is required.**

Approved By \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

