

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

SITE NAME: Smith
 LOCATION: Sec 21 T4S R50E
 SIZE: 8.3 Acres

APPLICANT: Wickens Construction
 COUNTY: Powder River
 TYPE OF OPERATION: Borrow

PROPOSED ACTION: Wickens Construction proposes to mine 26,000 cu. yds of borrow from this 8.3-acre sit located on long ridge. The site is located next to the R/W south of Highway 212. Material would be used for road reconstruction. Final reclamation to range grasses would be accomplished by September 2009. Bond is calculated at \$9,573.

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
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT						
1. <u>TOPOGRAPHY</u>			X	X		The site is in a large, flat area at the same elevation as the highway. Mining would remove about 10 feet of material. The landowner has a set of shipping corrals next to the site.
2. <u>GEOLOGY</u> ; Stability			X	X		This area is in the Montana Plains Province of the Missouri Plateau, in the Fort Union Formation.
3. <u>SOILS</u> ; Quality, Distribution			X		X	The soils are of the Elso-Midway-Thurlow Association. They are nearly level to steeply sloped, shallow silt loams and clay loams built over stratified sandy, silty, and clayey shale. Because these soils are on ridge tops or are fairly steeply sloped, a maximum of 6 inches of good soil materials exists. This would be salvaged and replaced on residual borrow. Annual precipitation averages about 16 inches. Although these soils are not very productive, they should allow for good reclamation to rangeland.
4. <u>WATER</u> ; Quality; Quantity; Distribution			X		X	Site is about 20 vertical feet above the surrounding area in the valley of the East Fork of Wolf Creek. There are no surface water creeks or springs nearby. No wells are in the area. The corrals do not have a water source. No impacts to water would occur.
5. <u>AIR</u> ; Quality			X		X	Good. No impacts.
6. <u>UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE, or LIMITED</u> environmental resources			X		X	The Plains Spadefoot frog is ranked as sensitive by the BLM and Forest Service. Its assumed range covers almost all of the plains two-thirds of Montana and many other states. It requires permanent water sources to survive, and possibly lives in riparian habitat along the East and West

				POTENTIAL IMPACTS		
	A	B	C	LONG TERM	SHORT TERM	EXPLANATION
						Forks of the Wolf. None of this habitat is on site or nearby. No impact to this species would be expected.
BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT						
1. <u>TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN, and AQUATIC</u> ; species and habitats			X		X	Deer, antelope, upland game birds, coyotes, and small mammals are in the vicinity of this site. Sage grouse may traverse the area but with limited sagebrush on site, it is not good habitat for this species.
2. <u>VEGETATION</u> ; quantity, quality, species			X		X	Range grasses – mainly western wheatgrass, needle grasses - and some sagebrush. No riparian or wetland habitat exists.
3. <u>AGRICULTURE</u> ; grazing, crops production			X		X	Rangeland.
HUMAN ENVIRONMENT						
1. <u>SOCIAL</u> ; structures and mores			X		X	
2. <u>CULTURAL</u> uniqueness, diverse			X		X	
3. <u>POPULATION</u> ; quantity, diverse			X		X	Sparsely populated ranches.
4. <u>HOUSING</u> ; quantity, distribution			X		X	
5. <u>HUMAN HEALTH & SAFETY</u>			X		X	
6. <u>COMMUNITY & PERSONAL INCOME</u>			X		X	
7. <u>EMPLOYMENT</u> ; quantity and distribution			X	X	X	Short term construction jobs. Long-term indirect income would be generated by the improved transportation system that links this very remote area.
8. <u>TAX BASE</u> ; local and state tax revenue			X		X	
9. <u>GOVERNMENT SERVICES</u> ; demand			X		X	
10. <u>INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL and AGRICULTURAL</u> activities			X	X		Increased agricultural/industrial hauling because no longer curtailed by bad weather and impassable roads.
11. <u>HISTORICAL and ARCHAEOLOGICAL</u>			X		X	The site is associated with an MTDOT highway project. A walkover of the area did not reveal any artifacts or signs of occupation. No signs were evident at depth in nearby previously disturbed areas. If during operations resources were to be discovered, activities would be halted, or possibly temporarily moved to another area until SHPO was contacted and the importance of the site was determined.

	A	B	C	POTENTIAL IMPACTS		
				LONG TERM	SHORT TERM	EXPLANATION
12. <u>AESTHETICS</u>			X		X	
13. <u>ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS</u> and <u>GOALS</u> ; local and regional			X		X	
14. <u>DEMANDS</u> on <u>ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES</u> of land, water, air and energy			X		X	
15. <u>TRANSPORTATION</u> ; networks and traffic flows			X		X	This is a major trucking route. It is connector route from Billings to I-90 in South Dakota. Often winter storms make travel on I-90 very difficult in Wyoming, but Highway 212 is north of them and in clear weather. The route is about 100 miles shorter to Rapid City than taking I-90.

REGULATORY IMPACT ON PRIVATE PROPERTY: None

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: Landowner, Powder River County Commissioners, Powder River County Weed Board, Natural Heritage Program, State Historic Preservation Office

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED: Denial

OTHER GROUPS OR AGENCIES CONTACTED OR WHICH MAY HAVE OVERLAPPING JURISDICTION: Air Resources Management Bureau, Mining Safety and Health, Mt Dept. Transportation

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING PREPARATION OF AN EIS: Unnecessary, No Significant Impacts

APPROVED BY: _____ DATE: _____

Prepared by Jo Stephen, July, 2008