



COLORADO DIVISION OF RECLAMATION, MINING AND SAFETY
MINERALS PROGRAM INSPECTION REPORT
PHONE: (303) 866-3567

The Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety has conducted an inspection of the mining operation noted below. This report documents observations concerning compliance with the terms of the permit and applicable rules and regulations of the Mined Land Reclamation Board.

MINE NAME: Branson Gravel Pit	MINE/PROSPECTING ID#: M-1997-100	MINERAL: Gravel	COUNTY: Las Animas
INSPECTION TYPE: Preoperation Inspection	INSPECTOR(S): Amy Eschberger	INSP. DATE: May 20, 2015	INSP. TIME: 01:00
OPERATOR: Las Animas County	OPERATOR REPRESENTATIVE: Blair Weurding	TYPE OF OPERATION: 112c - Construction Regular Operation	

REASON FOR INSPECTION: Preoperation Inspection	BOND CALCULATION TYPE: None	BOND AMOUNT: \$0.00
DATE OF COMPLAINT: NA	POST INSP. CONTACTS: None	JOINT INSP. AGENCY: None
WEATHER: Clear	INSPECTOR'S SIGNATURE: <i>Amy Eschberger</i>	SIGNATURE DATE: June 5, 2015

GENERAL INSPECTION TOPICS

This list identifies the environmental and permit parameters inspected and gives a categorical evaluation of each. No problems or possible violations were noted during the inspection. The mine operation was found to be in full compliance with Mineral Rules and Regulations of the Colorado Mined Land Reclamation Board for the Extraction of Construction Materials and/or for Hard Rock, Metal and Designated Mining Operations. Any person engaged in any mining operation shall notify the office of any failure or imminent failure, as soon as reasonably practicable after such person has knowledge of such condition or of any impoundment, embankment, or slope that poses a reasonable potential for danger to any persons or property or to the environment; or any environmental protection facility designed to contain or control chemicals or waste which are acid or toxic-forming, as identified in the permit.

(AR) RECORDS----- <u>Y</u>	(FN) FINANCIAL WARRANTY----- <u>NA</u>	(RD) ROADS----- <u>Y</u>
(HB) HYDROLOGIC BALANCE----- <u>Y</u>	(BG) BACKFILL & GRADING----- <u>Y</u>	(EX) EXPLOSIVES----- <u>NA</u>
(PW) PROCESSING WASTE/TAILING---- <u>Y</u>	(SF) PROCESSING FACILITIES----- <u>NA</u>	(TS) TOPSOIL----- <u>N</u>
(MP) GENL MINE PLAN COMPLIANCE- <u>Y</u>	(FW) FISH & WILDLIFE----- <u>N</u>	(RV) REVEGETATION---- <u>Y</u>
(SM) SIGNS AND MARKERS----- <u>Y</u>	(SP) STORM WATER MGT PLAN---- <u>Y</u>	(SB) COMPLETE INSP---- <u>Y</u>
(ES) OVERBURDEN/DEV. WASTE----- <u>Y</u>	(SC) EROSION/SEDIMENTATION--- <u>Y</u>	(RS) RECL PLAN/COMP-- <u>Y</u>
(AT) ACID OR TOXIC MATERIALS----- <u>NA</u>	(OD) OFF-SITE DAMAGE----- <u>Y</u>	(ST) STIPULATIONS----- <u>NA</u>

Y = Inspected and found in compliance / N = Not inspected / NA = Not applicable to this operation / PB = Problem cited / PV = Possible violation cited

OBSERVATIONS

This was a preoperation inspection of the Branson Gravel Pit (Permit No. M-1997-100) conducted by Amy Eschberger of the Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety (Division) in response to a permit Amendment application (AM-01) that was received by the Division on 04/13/2015. This application was called complete on 06/02/2015 and is currently under technical review. Mr. Blair Weurding represented the operator, Las Animas County for the inspection. The site is located approximately 2 miles southeast of Branson, Colorado in Las Animas County, on land owned by Doherty Ranches, Inc. Access to the site is by an existing dirt haul road that runs south off of Co Rd 4 and approaches the permit area from the north. This road will remain after reclamation for the landowner's use. The approved post-mining land use is rangeland.

This is a 112c operation permitted for 15.49 acres to mine gravel for use in maintenance of county roads. Mining consists of removing the material from the top of a hill. The maximum depth of mining is approximately 20 feet. AM-01 is proposing to expand the site to the west and southwest by 24.41 acres, which would give a new total permit area of 39.9 acres. The maximum allowed disturbed acreage is proposed to be the total permitted acreage. Mining in this proposed area would consist of removing an adjacent hilltop in a similar fashion to what occurred in the existing permit area. Gravel resources have been mostly exhausted in the existing permit area, and reclamation of this land will proceed as mining begins on the adjacent hilltop. This site operates intermittently, and will continue to do so.

At the time of the inspection, the weather was partly cloudy and cool, and the ground was wet due to recent storm events. Standing water was present in the existing pit, as it was observed throughout the region. The permit sign was posted at the site entrance off of Co Rd 4 (Photo 1). The existing permit boundary was marked with metal posts (Photo 2). However, the western permit boundary of the proposed additional acreage had not yet been marked. It was not difficult to determine where the proposed boundary will be located since the boundary follows the base of the hill. Mr. Weurding stated they will soon place posts in this area in accordance with the GPS coordinates submitted with the AM-01 application. The operator should get the new markers in place before the operation moves into the proposed expansion area.

There are three existing structures located within 200 feet of the affected area and proposed affected area (besides the haul road), including, a barbed wire fence that runs north-south along the east side of the haul road (Photo 3), a water storage tank located just outside of the northwestern boundary of the proposed extension (Photo 4), and an underground water line that runs southwest-northeast outside of the northern permit boundary. All of these structures are owned by the landowner, Doherty Ranches, Inc., for which a proper structure agreement was included in the AM-01 application. No additional structures were noted during the inspection. The barbed wire fence used to run straight through the eastern portion of the permit area; however, that portion was temporarily relocated east of the permit boundary. The operator has an agreement with the landowner to move this portion of the fence back to its previous position once the mining operation concludes.

No mining activities were occurring on site during the inspection, and no equipment was present. The Division estimates current disturbance to be approximately 12.2 acres (see enclosed Google Earth image), including the mined hill top encircled by topsoil berms (Photos 5-7), and a dirt haul road that circles through the western portion of the pit. No material stockpiles remain on site. This method of mining does not produce a highwall.

The vegetative cover across undisturbed areas includes a mixture of native grasses, forbs, fringed sagebrush, some annual weeds, yucca, and juniper trees (Photos 8-15). The reclamation plan will be the same as the approved plan, which includes grading all mined slopes to 3H:1V or flatter, replacing any overburden that remains and a minimum of 6 inches of topsoil, and seeding the disturbed land with the NRCS recommended seed mixture [included with the Conversion application (CN-01) from 2008]. Mr. Weurding indicated they intend to begin mining the expanded area later this summer once it remains dry long enough. No problems were observed at this site. The Division will continue reviewing the AM-01 application, for which the decision due date is set for 08/31/2015.

PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1. View of permit sign posted at site entrance off of Co Rd 4. The AM-01 public notice sign was also posted here.



Photo 2. View looking northeast toward existing pit, showing boundary marker placed at southwest corner of existing permit area which will mark the proposed south-central permit boundary.



Photo 3. View looking northeast from top of hill in existing permit area, showing barbed wire fence present along east side of access road.



Photo 4. View of water storage tank located within 200 feet of proposed northwestern permit boundary.



Photo 5. View looking northeast across mined hilltop in existing permit area. Note topsoil berms around edges of pit (indicated). Standing water from recent storm.



Photo 6. View looking southeast across mined hilltop in existing permit area. Note topsoil berms around edges of pit (indicated). Standing water from recent storm.



Photo 7. View of topsoil stockpile located at southwestern edge of mined hilltop in existing permit area.



Photo 8. View looking west from existing permit area at adjacent hill to be mined in proposed expansion.



Photo 9. View looking southeast from proposed northwestern permit boundary, showing adjacent hill to be mined.



Photo 10. View looking southeast from proposed western permit boundary, showing adjacent hill to be mined.



Photo 11. View looking northwest across bottom of adjacent hill in proposed expansion area.



Photo 12. View looking southeast along proposed southwestern permit boundary.



Photo 13. View looking east from southwestern proposed permit boundary, looking toward mined hilltop in existing permit area.



Photo 14. View looking north up south side of hill to be mined in proposed extension area.



Photo 15. View looking northwest from between two hills in proposed permit area, showing eastern portion of hill to be disturbed.

Inspection Contact Address

Blair Weurding
Las Animas County
2000 N. Linden Ave.
Trinidad, CO 81082

Enclosure(s): Google Earth image of site with Division markings

CC: Gary D. Hill
Las Animas County
200 E. 1st Street, Room 110
Trinidad, CO 81082

Wally Erickson, DRMS

M1997-100 / Branson Gravel Pit / Las Animas County

Red Line = 39.9 acres = Proposed Permit Area

Blue Line = 12.2 acres = Current Disturbance (as of 5/20/15 Inspection)

