

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
Permitting and Compliance Division
Air and Waste Management Bureau
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DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)

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**ENVIRONMENTAL
QUALITY COUNCIL**

Issued For: United Harvest, LLC
Pompeys Pillar Elevator
200 SW Market Street, Suite 1780
Portland, OR 97201-5715

Air Quality Permit Number: #3126-00
Preliminary Determination Issued: 08/31/00

1. Legal Description of Site: The rail loadout grain sub-terminal is proposed to be located about 0.5 miles west of Exit 23 on U.S. Interstate Highway 94, adjacent to the south side of State Highway 312, and approximately 2.25 miles west-southwest of Pompeys Pillar, Montana. The legal description of the facility is the W 1/2 of the NW 1/4 of Section 28, Township 3 North, Range 30 East, Yellowstone County, Montana.

2. Description of Project: The department proposes to issue an air quality preconstruction permit to United Harvest for the construction and operation of a rail loadout grain sub-terminal.

Locally grown grains would be trucked in by hopper truck. Each truck would be weighed on a platform scale and a probe would take a sample of the inbound grain for quality assurance measures. The trucks would be routed to the receiving building where both truck hoppers could be simultaneously discharged into an elongated receiving pit. Particulate matter emissions from the unloading operation would be collected by a negative air system and routed to a cyclone for control. Enclosed drag conveyors and a bucket elevator, rated at 20,000 bushels per hour, would route the grain into concrete storage silos, or to a bulk weigher located over the railroad track. An enclosed drag conveyor would be used to transport the grain from the storage silos. Both the reclaim conveyor and the shipping leg would be sized to handle 50,000 bushels per hour. The bulk loadout scale would be sized to allow a 110-car unit train to be loaded in a 12-hour shift.

The facility would be owned by United Grain Corporation of Portland, Oregon. United Harvest, LLC is a 50-50 joint venture of United Grain Corporation and Cenex Harvest States Cooperatives. United Harvest would manage the construction phase of the project. Upon completion, the facility would be leased by United Grain Corporation to United Harvest, LLC for operation. United Harvest, LLC would utilize the Cenex Harvest States local office in Lewistown, and its personnel, to operate the facility.

3. Objectives of Project: The proposed facility would receive, store, and ship grain for the area farmers. The proposed facility would provide area producers and local county grain elevators with a regional site for high speed loading of locally produced whole grains. The high speed rail loading should result in more favorable shipping rates from the local railroad.

4. Alternatives Considered: In addition to the proposed action, the department also considered the "no action" alternative. The "no action" alternative would deny the issuance of the air quality preconstruction permit to the proposed facility. However, the department does not consider the "no action" alternative to be appropriate because United Harvest has demonstrated compliance with all applicable rules and regulations as required for permit issuance. Therefore, the "no action" alternative was eliminated from further consideration.

5. A listing of mitigation, stipulations, and other controls: A list of enforceable conditions, including a BACT analysis, would be included in permit #3126-00.
6. Regulatory effects on private property: The department has considered alternatives to the conditions that would be imposed in this permit as part of the permit development. The department has determined that the permit conditions would be reasonably necessary to ensure compliance with applicable requirements and demonstrate compliance with those requirements and do not unduly restrict private property rights.
7. The following table summarizes the potential physical and biological effects of the proposed project on the human environment. The "no action" alternative was discussed previously.

Potential Physical and Biological Effects							
		Major	Moderate	Minor	None	Unknown	Comments Included
A	Terrestrial and Aquatic Life and Habitats			✓			yes
B	Water Quality, Quantity, and Distribution				✓		yes
C	Geology and Soil Quality, Stability, and Moisture			✓			yes
D	Vegetation Cover, Quantity, and Quality			✓			yes
E	Aesthetics		✓				yes
F	Air Quality			✓			yes
G	Unique Endangered, Fragile, or Limited Environmental Resource		✓				yes
H	Demands on Environmental Resource of Water, Air and Energy			✓			yes
I	Historical and Archaeological Sites		✓				yes
J	Cumulative and Secondary Impacts		✓				yes

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS ON POTENTIAL PHYSICAL AND BIOLOGICAL EFFECTS: The following comments have been prepared by the department.

A. Terrestrial and Aquatic Life and Habitats

There would be effects on the terrestrial life and habitats in the immediate area of the proposed project. However, because the project area is relatively small, consisting of only several acres, the proposed facility would only result in minor effects on the terrestrial life or habitats. The area around the site was formerly farmed for livestock grazing and hay crops. It would be expected to support the same terrestrial life as it did before the project. There would be no effects on the aquatic life and habitats in the area.

B. Water Quality, Quantity, and Distribution

The proposed facility would utilize a well for drinking water. There would be a septic system and drainfield for wastewater and human sewage. There are no wetlands at the site. The proposed facility would not affect the water in the area.

C. Geology and Soil Quality, Stability, and Moisture

There would be an effect on the soils in the immediate area of the rail loadout grain sub-terminal because there would be new construction of footings, foundations, roads, railroad tracks, etc. There is about 1 foot of topsoil followed by a 5-6-foot layer of clay. The clay layer is underlain by sand and gravel to a depth of about 28 feet, and then claystone bedrock. Excavation at the proposed site would be to a depth of 10 to 20 feet in approximately an 80 square foot area. Overall, the effects on geology and soil quality, stability, and moisture would be minor because the construction would occur in a relatively small area of the property.

D. Vegetation Cover, Quantity, and Quality

There would be effects on vegetation cover, quantity, and quality in the immediate area of the rail loadout grain sub-terminal because there would be new construction of footings, foundations, roads, railroad tracks, etc. The site was formerly farmed for livestock grazing and hay crops and some common weeds and grasses were present. However, the effects on vegetation cover, quantity, and quality would be minor because the construction would occur in a relatively small area of the property, and upon completion of the project the unused adjacent land could return to small-scale farm use.

E. Aesthetics

There would be effects on the aesthetics of the area from the construction of the facility, as well as from the visible emissions from the facility. The small, rural community of Pompeys Pillar is located about 2 miles east-northeast of the proposed facility, and the closest residence is located about ¾ mile west. The Pompeys Pillar historic site is located about ¼ mile north of the project site. The noise level from the facility exhaust fan is estimated to be 97 dBA at 5 feet. However, the noise level is expected to be minimized by positioning the fan discharge vertically, not horizontally. The aesthetic effects from the facility would be moderate. However, United Harvest could minimize aesthetic effects by taking measures to lessen the visibility of the proposed facility, such as painting the facility a color that is not visually obtrusive. Also, the aesthetic effects would be minimized because the visible emissions would be limited by air quality permit #3126-00 to less than 20% opacity.

F. Air Quality

There would be effects on the air quality of the area due to emissions of particulate matter from the facility. Air quality permit #3126-00 would contain conditions limiting opacity, requiring the use of a negative air system and cyclone to control dust from grain receiving, and a throughput limit on the amount of grain that can be processed in a rolling 12-month period. If the facility operates in compliance with all applicable permit requirements, then the effects on air quality would be minor.

G. Unique Endangered, Fragile, or Limited Environmental Resources

The department contacted the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP) in an effort to identify any species of special concern associated with the proposed site location. Search results have concluded there are three such environmental resources in the area. Area, in this case, is defined by the township and range of the proposed site, with an additional 1-mile buffer. The species of special concern include the Bald Eagle, the Great Blue Heron, and the Spiny Softshell. While these resources are found within the defined area, the MNHP search did not indicate any species of special concern located directly on the proposed site.

It is very unlikely that the Spiny Softshell will be affected by the proposed project since its habitat is restricted to within about 55 yards of a large river and the proposed project site is about 1 mile from the Yellowstone River. There are potential nesting sites for Bald Eagles and Great Blue Herons within approximately 1 mile of the proposed site. However, most of the activities for the proposed facility would not occur during the very sensitive Bald Eagle nesting period of February 1 – May 1 (ref. Montana Bald Eagle Management Plan). The busiest time of year for the proposed facility would occur during and just after the harvest season, approximately August through December. Therefore, it is not expected that the proposed facility would affect any potential population of Eagles in the area. United Harvest would be responsible for compliance with any applicable rules and regulations, including the Bald Eagle Protection Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and the Endangered Species Act, particularly if the proposed facility affects the recognized Bald Eagle nesting period. The department has determined that the proposed facility would have moderate effects on certain sensitive, unique, endangered, or threatened species.

H. Demands on Environmental Resource of Water, Air, and Energy

The proposed project would place minor demands on the energy resources in the area, but it is expected that the local utility company would have no difficulty in supplying the electricity needed. The very minor demands on water resources would be met by a local groundwater well. There would be effects on the air resource in the area of the proposed facility. Air quality permit #3126-00 would contain conditions limiting opacity, requiring the use of a negative air system and cyclone to control dust from grain receiving, and a throughput limit on the amount of grain that can be processed in a rolling 12-month period. If the facility operates in compliance with all applicable permit requirements, then the effects would be minor.

I. Historical and Archaeological Sites

The department contacted the Montana Historical Society (MHS) in an effort to identify any known historical, cultural, or archaeological sites located on or near the proposed site. The MHS search revealed several sites of historical, cultural, or archaeological significance found within Section 28, Township 3 North, Range 30 East in Yellowstone County, MT. These sites include the following: two historic railroad stage routes (site #24YL0277 and site #24YL0694), a historic railroad bridge (site #24YL0695), a historic railroad building/structure (site #24YL1379), a historic homestead/farmstead (site #24YL1335), a historic irrigation system (site #24YL0285), and a national historic landmark (Pompeys Pillar). The department has determined that the proposed project would have moderate effects on historical and archaeological sites.

The Montana Historical Society commented that "... based on the presence of significant cultural properties in the area that there is a strong potential for this undertaking to impact cultural properties. Therefore we would recommend that a cultural resource inventory be conducted in order to determine any primary or visual impacts that this undertaking may have on cultural resources in the area."

J. Cumulative and Secondary Impacts

Overall, the proposed facility would result in moderate cumulative and secondary impacts because of the potential effects on species of special concern and historic sites. However, the amount of air emissions from the proposed facility would be well regulated, and seasonal in nature. Air pollution from the facility would be controlled by department-determined BACT and conditions in permit #3126-00. The department expects that this facility would operate in compliance with all applicable rules and regulations as outlined in permit #3126-00.

8. The following table summarizes the potential social and economic effects of the proposed project on the human environment. The "no action" alternative was discussed previously.

Potential Social and Economic Effects							
		Major	Moderate	Minor	None	Unknown	Comments Included
A	Social Structures and Mores				✓		yes
B	Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity		✓				yes
C	Local and State Tax Base and Tax Revenue			✓			yes
D	Agricultural or Industrial Production			✓			yes
E	Human Health			✓			yes
F	Access to and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities			✓			yes
G	Quantity and Distribution of Employment			✓			yes
H	Distribution of Population				✓		yes
I	Demands for Government Services			✓			yes
J	Industrial and Commercial Activity			✓			yes
K	Locally Adopted Environmental Plans and Goals				✓		yes
L	Cumulative and Secondary Impacts			✓			yes

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS ON POTENTIAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EFFECTS: The following comments have been prepared by the department.

A. Social Structures and Mores

There would be no effects on native or traditional lifestyles or communities from the proposed facility.

B. Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity

The proposed facility would effect the cultural uniqueness of the area. The proposed facility would be located within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of the Pompeys Pillar National Historic Landmark. The department has determined that the proposed project would have moderate effects on cultural uniqueness and no effects on cultural diversity.

The Montana Historical Society commented that "... based on the presence of significant cultural properties in the area that there is a strong potential for this undertaking to impact cultural properties. Therefore we would recommend that a cultural resource inventory be conducted in order to determine any primary or visual impacts that this undertaking may have on cultural resources in the area."

C. Local and State Tax Base and Tax Revenue

The proposed facility would have a minor effect on the local and state tax base and tax revenue. The proposed facility would serve a need and generate local revenue in the process.

D. Agricultural or Industrial Production

The proposed facility would have a minor effect on agricultural production in the area. Farmers in the area would have a local facility to receive, store, and ship their products.

E. Human Health

There would be minor effects on human health from particulate matter emissions from the proposed facility. Air quality permit #3126-00 would contain conditions limiting opacity, requiring the use of a negative air system and cyclone to control dust from grain receiving, and a throughput limit on the amount of grain that can be processed in a rolling 12-month period. These conditions are designed to be protective of human health. If the facility operates in compliance with all applicable permit requirements, then the effects would be minor.

F. Access to and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities

The proposed facility would have no effect on the access to and quality of wilderness activities because there are no wilderness areas near the proposed facility. The proposed facility would have no effect on the access to local recreational sites. The Pompeys Pillar historic site is located about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile north of the project site. The proposed facility would have minor effects on the quality of recreational activities at the Pompeys Pillar National Historic Landmark. There would be effects on the aesthetics of the area from the presence of the facility, as well as from the visible emissions from the facility. However, United Harvest could minimize aesthetic effects by taking measures to lessen the visibility of the proposed facility, such as painting the facility a color that is not visually obtrusive. Also, the aesthetic effects would be minimized because the visible emissions would be limited by permit to less than 20% opacity. The noise level from the facility exhaust fan is estimated to be 97 dBA at 5 feet, but this level is expected to be less than that because the fan will be positioned for a vertical discharge, not horizontal.

G. Quantity and Distribution of Employment

There would be a minor effect on employment in the area. There would be approximately 22-26 people employed during the construction phase. After the construction phase, the proposed facility would employ approximately 4 individuals.

H. Distribution of Population

The facility would not affect the normal population distribution in the area.

I. Demands of Government Services

Demands on government services from this facility would be minor. Increases may be seen in grain truck traffic on existing roads in the area while the facility is operating. The acquisition of the appropriate permits by the facility would also require minor services from the government.

J. Industrial and Commercial Activity

Construction and operation of the proposed facility would not result in an increase in the industrial activity in the area. Construction of the proposed facility would result in temporary minor increases in the commercial activity in the area.

K. Locally Adopted Environmental Plans and Goals

The department is not aware of any locally adopted environmental plans or goals. The state standards would protect the local site and the surrounding environment.

L. Cumulative and Secondary Impacts

The amount of air emissions from the proposed facility would be well regulated and seasonal in nature. The proposed facility would result in moderate effects on the cultural uniqueness of the area because the proposed facility would be located within $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile of the Pompeys Pillar National Historic Landmark. Overall, the cumulative and secondary impacts from this project would result in minor effects to the immediate area. Air emissions from the facility would be controlled by department-determined BACT and conditions in permit #3126-00.

Recommendation: No EIS is required.

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is an appropriate level of analysis: The current permitting action is for the construction and operation of a rail loadout grain sub-terminal. Permit #3126-00 includes conditions and limitations to ensure the facility would operate in compliance with all applicable air quality rules and regulations. In addition, there are no major or unknown effects associated with this proposal.

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction: Montana Department of Natural Resources (DNRC), Montana Historical Society, U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Individuals or groups contributing to this EA: Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Air and Waste Management Bureau, Montana Natural Heritage Program, Montana Historical Society.

**EA prepared by: Robert K. Jeffrey
Date: August 28, 2000**