

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
HiLine District
Glasgow Field Office
External Scoping Request**

July 7, 2015

Project Lead: Craig Towery – BLM Geologist

Project or Action Name: S&B Industrial Minerals North America INC, Bent #4

Anticipated Level of Analysis, Type & Number of Document:

Environmental Assessment: DOI-BLM MT-M020-2015-0014-EA

Bureau of Land Management Purpose & Need for the Action:

The purpose of this federal action is to provide S&B Industrial Minerals North America INC the opportunity to resume and expand mining operations necessary to recover Bentonite at the Bent #4 Mine; to authorize mining and mineral exploration activities consistent with the statutory right of the proponent to explore for and develop mineral resources on federally-administered lands under the General Mining Law of 1872; and with other laws and regulations including the Judith Valley Phillips RMP of 1992.

The Need for the federal action is established by Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) responsibility under the BLM Surface Management Regulations at 43 CFR 3809, to respond to a Plan of Operations and to take any action necessary to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the lands.

The proponent's need is to extract known Bentonite deposits within the proposed Project Area, and to explore for and define the nature, extent, shape, and economic value of potentially additional deposits. In addition, there is a connected action under the NEPA, which would not be required if the activities under the Proposed Action were not approved. The connected action is the processing and drying of Bentonite on the operator's adjacent private land parcel. The decision for the BLM to make is whether to approve the Plan (activities on BLM lands only) as submitted or to approve with additional measures to protect surface resources.

Description of the Proposed Action:

The proposed Bent #4 Plan of Operations (POO) MTM-108262 would disturb 12.8 acres adjacent to a previously mined and reclaimed disturbance area of approximately 5 acres, POO MTM-093981. The proposed Bent #4 POO would use open cut mining techniques to strip and haul bentonite to a private laydown area approximately two miles north from the proposed disturbance area along Bentonite Road. The proposal includes hauling the finished bentonite from the private inholding to the city of Glasgow Montana approximately 15 miles away on a county road (Bentonite Road, Valley County Montana).

