

17.24.306 BASELINE INFORMATION: PRIME FARMLAND INVESTIGATION

(1-3) Rule 17.24.306 requires an investigation to be conducted in consultation with the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and the results submitted relative to the presence of prime farmland within the proposed permit area. If the soil survey of the appropriate lands indicates that soils are present which meet the criteria for prime farmland, then a plan for mining and restoration of the land is required, as stipulated in Rule 17.24.324. If permit area soils do not meet the criteria, a negative determination for these lands must be requested, including reasons supporting this conclusion.

After contacting and consulting with the SCS, it has been determined that no prime farmland exists in the Bull Mountains Mine No. 1 permit area or mine plan area. All soils in Township 6 North, Range 26 East, Sections 12, 13, 14, 23, 24, 25, 26, 35, and 36 in Musselshell County; Township 6 North, Range 27 East, Sections 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 29, and 30 in Musselshell County; and Township 6 North, Range 27 East, Section 23 in Yellowstone County fail to meet at least one criteria in order to qualify as prime farmland. These criteria include specific characteristics relative to available water capacity, moisture and temperature regime, pH, depth to water table, conductivity, exchangeable sodium percentage, erodibility, frequency of flooding, permeability, and percent composition of rock fragments. Letters from the SCS, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service supporting this determination are presented as Exhibit 306-1 in Exhibit 306-2 respectively.