

October 26, 2020

Don Jacobs
Venture Stone, LLC
3953 Parkwood Dr.
Billings, MT 59106

Sent via email to: donventurestone@gmail.com

RE: Approval of Application to Amend Operating Permit No. 00189 (Amendment 001) – Venture Stone, LLC

Dear Mr. Jacobs,

On February 17, 2020, Venture Stone, LLC (Venture Stone) submitted an application to amend Operating Permit No. 00189 (Amendment 001) to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to add five rock collecting sites, Sites 7-11, to the operating permit. The operating permit currently consists of five rock collecting sites and one processing site. Venture Stone is a decorative rock picking operation which collects surface minerals from slopes and hillsides throughout Cascade County, Montana, generally 13 miles south and west of Great Falls. Revised versions of the application were submitted to DEQ in May and July 2020. A draft permit and “completeness and compliance” document were issued on August 6, 2020. A final permit, issued by DEQ, would authorize Venture Stone to extend its operation to include Sites 7-11.

DEQ published the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) on August 26, 2020. In the Draft EA, DEQ analyzed the possible environmental impacts of the Proposed Action. DEQ identified the Proposed Action as the preferred alternative. A 30-day public comment period was initiated after publication of the Draft EA. Two public comments were received on the Draft EA. On October 26, 2020, DEQ issued a Final EA, which included responses to substantive comments.

The decisions contained in this decision document are based on the analysis documented in the Final EA.

DEQ’s Decisions

DEQ has applied the significance criteria, according to the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 17.4.608, to determine the significance of potential impacts on the human environment. After applying those criteria, DEQ has determined that preparation of an EA is the appropriate level of review under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). A summary of DEQ’s review of the significance criteria is included in the Final EA.

DEQ has decided to approve Venture Stone’s application for Amendment 001, selecting Alternative 2 (the Proposed Action), as described in Final EA. Pending bond submittal and approval, the approved amendment would allow Venture Stone to extend its operations to include Sites 7-11. Before commencing activity authorized by this amendment, the permittee must be in compliance with Title 75, Chapter 2, Montana Code Annotated (MCA) as amended, Title 75, Chapter 5, MCA, as amended, Title 75, Chapter 6,

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MCA, as amended, and administrative rules adopted pursuant to these laws. Based on the application information submitted by Venture Stone, DEQ has determined Venture Stone to be in compliance with these statutory provisions.

Pursuant to Sections 82-4-337(1)(h)(i) and 82-4-338, MCA, Venture Stone is required to file with DEQ a reclamation bond in a form and amount determined by DEQ. DEQ will calculate the bond in accordance with Section 82-4-338, MCA, and is required to provide Venture Stone with the bond determination within 40 days of the date of this decision document (Section 82-4-337(2)(c), MCA). A final permit may not be issued until Venture Stone submits, and DEQ accepts, the corresponding bond.

Appeal of DEQ's Decisions

Legal actions seeking review of DEQ's approval of Venture Stone's application for amendment must be filed within 90 days from the date of this decision document under Section 82-4-349(1), MCA. Any action or proceeding alleging a failure by DEQ to comply with MEPA, or inadequate compliance with a MEPA requirement, must be brought within 60 days after issuance of this decision document pursuant to Section 75-1-201(5)(a)(ii), MCA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dan Walsh". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Dan Walsh
Chief, Hard Rock Mining Bureau
Air, Energy and Mining Division
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
(406) 444-6791 or dwalsh@mt.gov

CC: Shane Price, TetraTech Shane.Price@tetrattech.com