

## Construction Aggregate Land Use

The mining of natural resource materials has been singled out for discussion due to its present and future impact on the rural area. Rock, sand and gravel extraction sites are scattered across the county and function mainly as a source of aggregate for the construction industry.

In the late 1800's, the East Sioux Falls Quarry Company began surface mining a pink stone known as Sioux quartzite. A 1904 company brochure stated that this stone was confined to a very limited area along the Big Sioux River valley and its tributaries surrounding Sioux Falls. The heaviest outcroppings were located along the bluffs and in the bed of the river in Sioux Falls and at the company's quarry in East Sioux Falls.

By the late 1800's, East Sioux Falls had developed into a thriving community located along the Illinois Central Railroad six miles east of downtown Sioux Falls. Stone cutters supplied building and paving stone to many construction projects in Sioux Falls. This period of history is recorded in the many distinctive quartzite structures located throughout the county.

The East Sioux Falls quarry along with two other quarry sites east of the Big Sioux River closed shortly after the turn of the century. Three quarries currently operate in the county. The quarries in Sioux Falls and Dell Rapids have been in operation for many years. A third quarry was opened in 1984 one mile west of Rowena. Numerous rock outcroppings in the southeastern part of the county combined with increased competition among area construction companies led to other attempts to open quarries. Such efforts failed in part because of opposition from nearby landowners.

Negative impacts associated with quarrying include dust, noise, blasting, groundwater depletion, truck hauling and unsightly appearance. Companies naturally seek to mine sites where the rock is at or near the surface. Ironically, some of the residential construction which is fueling the need for aggregate has located in areas which will conflict with present and future extraction operations.

Much more prevalent are the sand and gravel pits dispersed across the county which supply aggregate to road construction and building projects. Extraction sites have also concentrated along Skunk Creek west of Sioux Falls. A large sand extraction operation opened in 1994 one mile northeast of Corson. Smaller isolated pits are scattered throughout the county and generally supply local needs such as gravel for township roads and an occasional project involving nearby highway construction. Many of these pits experience only limited usage while others remain inactive for several years at a time. The level of activity is generally dictated by the number of road or other construction projects in the general vicinity of these pits. Residents who have recently built in the country are usually surprised and upset when an unexpected flurry of activity occurs in previously inactive or seldom used pits.