

StarTribune.com | MINNEAPOLIS - ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

U: Shaping young minds, or new mines?

By **JEFF SHELMAN**, Star Tribune

April 10, 2008

The University of Minnesota has made another step toward entering the gravel mining business.

On Thursday afternoon, the facilities committee of the university's Board of Regents accepted responsibility for conducting environmental studies on about 5,000 acres in Rosemount. The university, which bought the property from the U.S. Army for \$1 in 1947, is planning to develop the Dakota County property over the next 25 to 30 years.

While the university hasn't locked itself into mining the gravel on the property, it certainly is interested in the prospect.

University Vice President Charles Muscoplat wouldn't comment on the current estimate of what the gravel is worth, but he said it was expected to be worth more than the 2003 estimate of \$14 million to \$21 million.

"There's at least that much plus the inflation of that," he said.

If the plan is approved this morning by the full board, the university will put out a request for a proposal for the environmental review. The goal is to select a vendor in June, and the study, to last about 18 months, will commence.

Because the Army previously produced gunpowder on the property, it's unclear whether the land has been contaminated.

"Doing the [impact study] doesn't mean that we're going to mine," Muscoplat said. "It will allow us to determine whether mining is a good idea or not from an environmental standpoint."

While the mining could be lucrative, Muscoplat said, the mining process would also allow for the flat land to be contoured and for amenities such as lakes and parks to be added.

The university hopes UMore Park will become a prototype community for the 21st century, with green energy and educational opportunities.

Jeff Shelman • 612-673-7478

© 2008 Star Tribune. All rights reserved.