

## **Wyoming Road Construction Beautifies Area by Eliminating Unsightly Dumping Grounds**

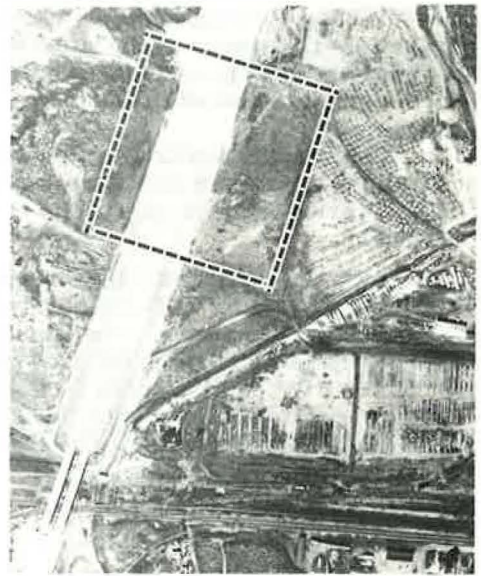
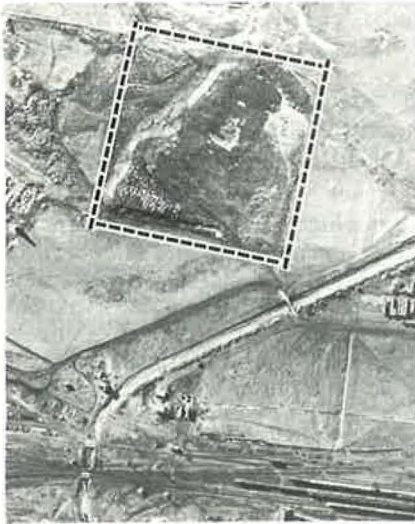
Long before everyone jumped onto the environmental bandwagon, the Wyoming Highway Department was quietly restoring deteriorated areas of the state in conjunction with its road-building program.

Unfortunately, there seems to be a popular belief that highway departments are burying the country in pavement. Yet few realize, in many cases, that the department enhances the beauty of an area through its construction operations.

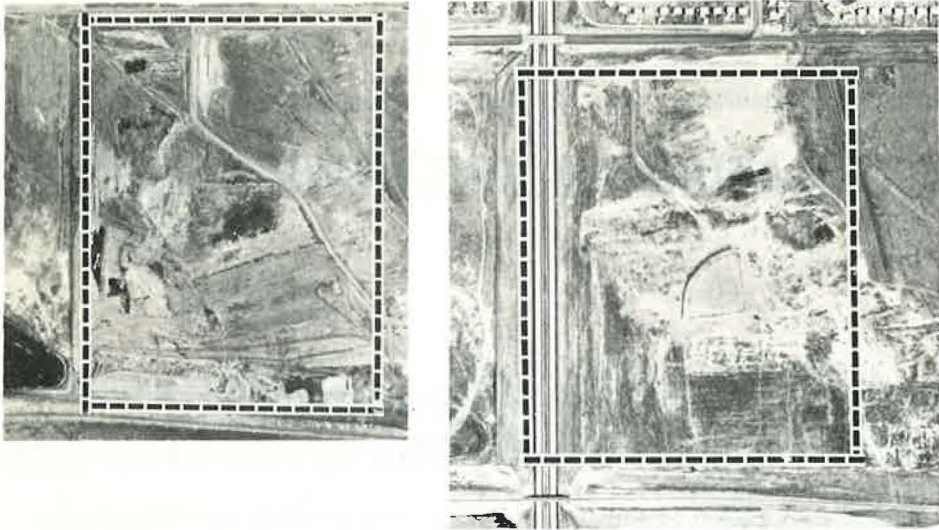
In fact, environmental considerations influence construction from the moment plans for a new highway take shape. Cost of restoring land as nearly as possible to its original state after a road has been built is incorporated into construction contracts. Revegetating right-of-way, controlling erosion, building highways to blend in with surroundings, and working to protect and preserve wildlife and fish are automatic in constructing Wyoming highways.

The department possessed an aroused environmental conscience back in the early '60s, before it was the nation's primary concern. As part of its Interstate construction program, the department improved several areas described, at best, as menacing eyesores.

In 1962, while building the Laramie marginal on I-80, the department encountered one such problem site on the southwest side of Laramie. A combination cinder and garbage dump existed near the timber-treating plant directly in the path of planned highway alignment. Garbage was cleared out and much of the cinder accumulation was utilized as land fill, cutting some of the construction cost. Even more importantly, however, an undesirable area was transformed into an esthetically pleasing one through the department's planning and environmental concern.



Cinder-garbage dump on outskirts of Laramie (left photo) was cleaned out and transformed into highway right-of-way.



The entire Cheyenne dump site, pictured at left, was transformed into a right-of-way area for Interstate 80.

The department met a similar situation head-on during construction of the Cheyenne marginal portion of I-80 southwest of the capital city. In this case, a huge city dump was the unsightly detractor. After thoroughly studying the area, engineers decided the best route for that section of roadway was through the dump area. Here, as at Laramie, the most acceptable alignment would eliminate an environmental mess.

During the winter of 1964-65, therefore, a time when fills are not normally constructed because of cold weather, the department undertook the task of clearing out the dump and preparing it for transformation into Interstate highway. Complicating clean-up operations were two large pools filled with mixtures of grease, oil, water, and other debris, in addition to accumulated garbage.

Most of the winter elapsed before the pools and garbage were eliminated. The highway right-of-way was covered with fill, leveled and converted into roadway. Almost  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of I-80 was constructed through the dump site. The area is now suitable for industrial or residential development.

These projects of the early '60s were pioneering efforts by the department in preserving and improving the natural surroundings. In fact, employment of cinders as an ingredient in land fill at Laramie may have been a forerunner to new highway construction developments aimed at saving our environment. Various sections of highway throughout the nation are being built on fill comprised of garbage and other solid waste materials, in a move to eliminate waste as well as to slice construction costs.

Contractors have used material such as crushed glass and fly ash in their road building. In one experimental section of highway, the waste produce of coal-burning power plants—slag—was substituted for the usual small aggregate utilized in road construction.

These and other environmental control techniques are being studied and utilized by the Wyoming Highway Department as part of its total effort to maintain the natural beauty of our land—an effort that has been under way for a long time, and that may have started the bandwagon rolling.