ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

May 22, 2000

Project Name: Special K **Proposed Implementation Date:** June 5, 2000

Proponent: Riverside Contracting, Inc.

Type and Purpose of Action: The proponent proposes to mine, crush and transport 35,000 cubic yards of sand & gravel from a 9.8-acre site for the overlaying with asphalt of a highway. There would be an asphalt plant connected with this operation. The site would be reclaimed by recontouring, respreading the topsoil and reseeding the site with grasses. The reclaimed use would be hayland. The site would be reclaimed by the late November 15, 2000.

Location: SENW 11 T3S R21E **County:** Stillwater

N = Not present or No Impact will occur.
Y = Impacts may occur (explain under Potential Impacts).

IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
RESOURCE	**[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**
1. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compactible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?	**[N]** The site lies on a flat alluvial terrace about ½ mile north of the Yellowstone. The well-drained, 12-inch deep, loamy soils overlay sandy gravel. Because of the flat topography runoff is slow and infiltration is good The site has been plowed and is used as irrigated pasture. The soils are not fragile, compactible or unstable. No unusual features occur that would require special consideration for reclamation.
2. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?	**[N]** The Yellowstone River lies about ½-mile north of the site. Irrigation ditches lie to the south and west sides of the site. Because of the naturally slow runoff rate, and the mine's plan to use silt fences and straw bales to impede runoff, activities at the site will not affect waterways. The haul road will be constructed adjacent to the railroad R/W. Sediment from surface runoff would be retained in the area between the haul road and the railroad. Ground water is approximately 30 feet deep. Since mining will only proceed to a depth of 15 feet, groundwater will not be affected. ~~The mine will employ berms and lining around its fuel station to contain possible spills~~. Best Management practices would be used to protect surface and ground water resources.
3. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	**[N]** The proposed mine will control dust on site through use of a water truck. The crusher is also equipped with sprayers to control emissions.
4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	**[N]** The site is presently an irrigated, mixed grass-alfalfa pasture with 100% ground cover. No weeds were present. Some shrubs grow in the fenceline. The Montana Natural Heritage Program conducted a literature and determined that no rare plants, cover types, or species of concern are present. No rare plants were seen during a field inspection.
5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	**[N]** Although Bald eagles use the Yellowstone River corridor, no nesting or perching trees are at the site, Occasionally deer, fox, and other small animals may use the site from time to time.
6. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Species of special concern?	**[N]** Bald eagles use the Yellowstone corridor extensively, but there are no trees that could be used for perching or nesting present or near the site. A nest is present approximately 1½ miles away near the river. Mining this site at this time of year should not impact the eagle's use of the river or its nest. Consultation with the Montana Natural Heritage Program and a site check indicate that no other species of concern are present.

7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	**[N]** The site has been plowed. No surface artifacts were observed. The nearby ditch banks were surveyed for subsurface artifacts, but nothing was observed. Steve Platt, archeologist for the Montana Department of Transportation , did not require a cultural resource survey. If the operator discovers any cultural resources the operation must be routed around the discovery for a reasonable time until salvage can be made. The State Historical Preservation office must be promptly notified.
8. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?	**[N]** The site is visible from the interstate about ¼ mile to the north, and from the landowner's place ¼ mile to the south. No excessive noise or light is anticipated. Hours of operation will be lengthy during the summer, but the site is scheduled to be reclaimed this fall.
9. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?	**[N]**
10. IMPACTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract?	**[N]**

IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	**[N]**
12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	**[N]** The products from the project will be used for road reconstruction and might temporarily improve the local economy. Production from the 10-acre site will be lost for the summer and will be reduced for the following year until vegetation is re-established.
13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	**[N]**
14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	**[Y]** Riverside Construction is a Montana based business. It and most of its employees pay taxes to the state. Few local tax monies will be generated
15. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?	**[N]** Some detouring of traffic may occur by locals wishing to avoid the road construction.
16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	**[N]**
17. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?	**[N]**
18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	**[N]**
19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	**[N]**

20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	**[N]**
21. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	**[N]**

22. Alternatives Considered:

Alternative 1: Action Denied. The owner of the resource would be denied full use of his property at this time.

Alternative 2: Alternate Location. An alternate location would be located farther from the road construction project, thus requiring increased traffic. This results in increased air pollution from diesel exhausts and road dust.

23. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted: Montana National Heritage Program, State Historic Preservation Office, Stillwater County Commissioners, Stillwater County Weed Control Program

24. Other Governmental Agencies with Jurisdiction, List of Permits Needed: Mine Safety and Health Administration for Safety permit, Montana Department of Labor and Industry, Bureau of Safety for permit.

25. Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts: Impacts are unlikely to be significant on the general environment because of the small scale and short duration of the project.

26. Regulatory Impact on Private Property: The analysis conducted in response to the Private Property Assessment Act indicates no impact.

Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis:

[ ] EIS [ ] More Detailed EA [X] No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Prepared By: Jo Stephen Title: Reclamation Specialist

Approved By: Jerry Burke Title: Opencut Mining Program Supervisor, IEMB

_____ _____

Signature Date