ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Galt # 3 **Proposed Implementation Date:** Late summer 2000
Proponent: SK Construction, Inc.
Type and Purpose of Action: The proponent proposes to mine and transport 30,000 cubic yards of borrow from a 5-acre site for the reconstruction of the U.S. Highway 89. There would not be an asphalt plant connected with this operation. The site would be reclaimed to a pond by recontouring, respreading the topsoil down to the high water mark and reseeding the site with grasses. The site would be reclaimed by June of 2001.
Location: NE¼, Sec. 23, T7N, R7E **County:** Meagher

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 proposed operation is located on the pediment on the foothills on the south side of the South Fork of the Smith River Valley. The soils are approximately 6 inches deep and are of a silty loam texture. The overburden would be used for borrow material. Reclamation would create a pond for livestock grazing. The pond would have irregular shorelines and would be topsoiled and seeded down to the high water mark. Microorganisms should reinvade the soil. There are no fragile, compactible or unstable soils present, no unusual geologic features, or special reclamation considerations.
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 South Fork of the Smith River is 50 feet to the north and east of the proposed borrow area. No mining would occur within 50 feet of the river. The proponent would use an excavator to mine the site. There are no water wells within 1,000 feet of the proposed pit. The site would be mined to a depth of 17 feet. The water table varies from 10 to 15 feet. No bulk fuel storage containers would be used at the site. Best Management Practices would be used to prevent any off site sedimentation or erosion. The proposed operation would not impact groundwater or any surface water sources.
3. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	**[Y]** Air quality would be degraded, but the proponent must comply with air quality standards. No crusher or other processing equipment would be utilized with this proposed operation. A water truck would be used to control dust on the haul road and the mine area.
4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	**[N]** The vegetation on the site consists mainly of fescue, prairie junegrass, sage and bluebunch wheatgrass. Native and non-native species would be seeded on the site after recontouring and retopsoiling. A literature search was done by the Montana National Heritage Program and no rare plants or cover types were identified as being present on the site and none were observed during a ground search.
5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	**[N]**
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]** The Montana Natural Heritage Program did a literature search and no federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat was noted as being present. The South Fork of the Smith river is within 50 feet of the proposed operation, but there would be no impact to the banks of the stream. No species of special concern were identified as being present on the site.

7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	**[N]** A cultural resource survey was done by Gar Wood and no cultural resources were identified on the site. If the operator of the proposed operation discovers any cultural resources the operation must be routed around the site of discovery for a reasonable amount of 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]**
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?	**[Y]** There will be increased hazards because of equipment activity and hauling of the sand and gravel. The applicant must comply with OSHA and MSHA regulations however, proper precautions will be taken to avoid accidents.
12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	**[N]** There will be a temporary loss of grazing on 9 acres of land until the site is successfully reclaimed.
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?	**[N]**
15. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed?	**[N]** The site will require periodic site evaluations, but these will be done in conjunction with other operations in the area.
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: Denial. Impacts would not occur at this location but, however, the proponent could apply to mine another area and similar impacts may be expected.

23. Public Involvement, Agencies, Groups or Individuals contacted: Montana Natural Heritage Program & Meagher County Weed Control District.

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

25. Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts: Impacts are unlikely to be significant on the general environment because of the small amount of disturbance 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: Jerry Burke Title: Supervisor, Opencut Mining Program, IEMB

Approved By: Steve Welch Title: Bureau Chief, Industrial & Energy Minerals Bureau

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Signature Date