Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Water Resources Division
Water Rights Bureau

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. Applicant/Contact name and address: Centennial Livestock, Inc.
900 Mansfield Ln.
Dillon, Montana 59725-9710

2. Type of action: Application to Change Water Right 41I 30107931

3. Water source name: Prickly Pear Creek

4. Location affected by project: Prickly Pear Ditch Headgate in the SESENW of Section 25, T10N R3W, to Lake Helena in the NWNW of Section 26, T11N, R3W, Lewis and Clark County.

5. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits: The DNRC shall issue a change authorization if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-402 MCA are met. The Applicant proposes to change the purpose and place of use of their portion of Statement of Claim No. 41I-127790-00 from irrigation to marketing for mitigation. Water historically used to flood irrigate 131 acres will no longer be used for irrigation purposes and will instead be left instream in order to mitigate depletions to surface water caused by future water use pursuant to 82-2-402, MCA. The place of use for mitigation will be comprised of the reach of Prickly Pear Creek from the Prickly Pear Ditch Headgate to Lake Helena. The Applicant proposes to allocate up to a volume of 116.2 AF that is associated with their portion of Claim 41I-127790-00 to marketing for mitigation between May 5 and September 27. Mitigation water will be delivered through a flow rate reduction of 1.76 CFS at the Prickly Pear Ditch Headgate during the period of diversion. Acres previously irrigated with this portion of the water right will continue to be irrigated with supplemental Water Right Nos. 41I-127791-00 and 41I-127792-00, and Helena Valley Irrigation District contract water.

6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:

Montana Natural Heritage Program	Species of Concern
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks	2005 Dewatered Stream List
Montana Department of Environmental Quality	303(d) list of impaired streams
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service	Web Soil Survey

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Water quantity *- Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically/periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.*

The Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) lists Prickly Pear Creek as a chronically dewatered stream. Streams are classified as chronically dewatered when dewatering is a significant problem in

virtually all years. The Applicant is proposing to change a portion of a water right for a consumptive use (flood irrigation) and change it to a non-consumptive use (marketing for mitigation). This new use will mitigate the effects associated with future uses of water and will not alter existing instream flows or negatively impact the stream by way of further dewatering.

Determination: No negative impact.

Water quality **-** *Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.*

The proposed marketing and mitigation reach associated with this application is located in a waterbody that meets all of its water quality standards to support all designated beneficial uses as limited by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. The proposed project will not alter and/or adversely affect water quality in Prickly Pear Creek. The purpose of the project is to leave water instream for marketing and mitigation purposes. Increases in flow resulting from this change in water use will help replace water depleted by future appropriations.

Determination: No negative impact.

Groundwater **-** *Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply.*
If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.

Determination: N/A as this change in use does not involve groundwater.

DIVERSION WORKS **-** *Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.*

To exercise the marketing and mitigation portion of Claim 41I-127790-00, no means of diversion or conveyance are needed other than the natural stream channel. There will be no construction that would impact the stream channel, or create a barrier to fish migration. There are no dams associated with this project, and groundwater quality/quantity will not be negatively altered. The project will result in flow modifications; however, the end result will be more water flowing in Prickly Pear Creek to replace water depleted by future appropriations.

Determination: No negative impact.

UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Endangered and threatened species **-** *Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern," or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater, assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or "species of special concern."*

The Montana Natural Heritage Program was consulted to determine if there are any threatened or endangered species, or species of concern, that could be impacted by the proposed project.

The Heritage Program identified black-tailed prairie dog, Canada lynx, hoary bat, plains spadefoot, and wedge-leaf saltbush as the only species of concern that have been observed within the vicinity of the proposed mitigation reach in Prickly Pear Creek. The proposed application will require no site disturbances, and the marketing for mitigation purpose will not result in the loss or negative alteration of any aquatic habitat.

Determination: No negative impact.

Wetlands - *Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.*

Determination: N/A as this project does not involve wetlands.

Ponds - *For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.*

Determination: N/A as this project does not involve ponds.

GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE - *Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.*

This proposed change will not result in any negative impacts to surrounding soils.

Determination: No impact.

VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS - *Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.*

This project will not result in any ground disturbance that could allow for the spread of noxious weeds, or cause any negative change to existing vegetative cover.

Determination: No impact.

AIR QUALITY - *Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.*

There will be no source of pollutants associated with the change in water use that will alter air quality.

Determination: No impact.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES - *Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project if it is on State or Federal Lands. If it is not on State or Federal Lands simply state NA-project not located on State or Federal Lands.*

There will be no construction or other activities that could degrade unique archeological or historical sites. There are no known unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project.

Determination: No impact.

DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY - *Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water and energy not already addressed.*

None identified.

Determination: No impact.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS - *Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.*

This project is not inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans or goals.

Determination: No impact.

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES - *Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.*

The proposed project will not negatively impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.

Determination: No impact.

HUMAN HEALTH - *Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.*

The project does not pose a significant risk to human health.

Determination: No impact.

PRIVATE PROPERTY - *Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.*
Yes___ No _X_ If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.

Determination: No impact.

OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - ***For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.***

Impacts on:

(a) *Cultural uniqueness and diversity?* None identified.

(*b*) *Local and state tax base and tax revenues?* None identified.

(c) *Existing land uses?* None identified.

(*d*) *Quantity and distribution of employment?* None identified.

(e) *Distribution and density of population and housing?* None identified.

(f) *Demands for government services?* None identified.

(g) *Industrial and commercial activity?* None identified.

(h) *Utilities?* None identified.

(i) *Transportation?* None identified.

(j) *Safety?* None identified.

(k) *Other appropriate social and economic circumstances?* None identified.

2. ***Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:***

Secondary Impacts None identified.

Cumulative Impacts None identified.

3. ***Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*** No reasonable alternatives were identified.

4. ***Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:***

Part III. Conclusion

1. ***Preferred Alternative:*** None identified.

2 ***Comments and Responses***

3. ***Finding:***
Yes___ No __X_ Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

An EIS is not the appropriate level of analysis for the proposed action because no significant impacts were identified.

Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:

Name: Danika Holmes
Title: Hydrologist/Water Resource Specialist
Date: June 20th, 2017