

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: Rubens Ranch Corp.
2. Type of action: Additional Stock Tanks (2)
3. Water source name: Groundwater
4. Location affected by project: Sec. 31, Twp. 25N, Rge. 4E
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 will install two additional stock tanks to the stockwater well.
6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment: None.

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Water quantity – The source is groundwater and the diverted volume will remain unchanged.

Determination: No impact to water quantity.

Water quality – No change will occur to the current groundwater source. This project will add new stock tanks so that the stock will not have to cross the Teton River as often and is supported by NRCS. This project should improve the water quality in the Teton River since fencing will be constructed to keep stock away from the river.

Determination: No impacts to source quality.

Groundwater – The well will continue to serve the same number of stock resulting in no change to the groundwater table.

Determination: No impact to groundwater.

DIVERSION WORKS – The well already exists and the new stock tanks and fence were already constructed with NRCS support. There will be no further impact from the diversion works since they are already installed.

Determination: No impact from diversion work construction.

UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Endangered and threatened species – There are no plant species of concern in 25N 4E identified by the Montana Natural Heritage Program. There are three animal species of concern: the Ferruginous Hawk, the Spiny Softshell, and Sauger. The construction phase of this project has already occurred and likely had no impact on these species. The reduction of stock in the river and banks will be a benefit to the Spiny Softshell and the Sauger.

Determination: No impact to endangered and threatened species.

Wetlands – The National Wetlands Inventory identified Riverine wetlands in the project area of impact. This wetland system includes all wetlands and deepwater habitats in a river or stream channel. No other wetland types were identified. Temporary disturbance occurred to this system during the pipeline installation. NRCS oversaw this installation. No further impacts will occur and disturbances from stock will be reduced.

Determination: No impact to wetlands.

Ponds – No ponds exist in the project area.

Determination: No impact to ponds.

GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE – The soils present at the site are Havre Loam and Havre-Glendive complex according to the NRCS Soil Survey. NRCS designed and supported this project. This project does not involve any land use changes.

Determination: No impact to soil quality, stability and moisture.

VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS – The area of impact includes the wetland system identified above and the Great Plains Mixedgrass Prairie. A temporary impact occurred during installation but no future impacts are expected. This project was designed by NRCS.

Determination: No impact to vegetation cover, quantity and quality of noxious weeds.

AIR QUALITY – Localized and short-term air quality effects may have occurred during pipeline and tank installation but would have been minimal. No further effects are expected.

Determination: No impacts to air quality.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES – NA, the project is not located on state or federal land.

Determination: No impact to historical and archeological sites.

DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY – No other impacts to environmental resources were identified.

Determination: No impact to land, water, and energy.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS – No local environmental plans or goals were identified. NRCS supported this project because it included fencing stock out of the Teton River.

Determination: No impact to local environmental plans and goals.

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES – This project only involves private land and is not available to the public for recreational and wilderness activities.

Determination: No impact to recreational and wilderness activities.

HUMAN HEALTH – No potential human health impacts were identified. The reduction of stock in the river should improve surface water quality.

Determination: No impact to human health.

PRIVATE PROPERTY - *Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.*

Yes ___ No X

Determination: No impacts to private property.

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? No impacts.
- (b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? No impacts.
- (c) Existing land uses? No impacts.
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? No impacts.

- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? No impacts.
- (f) Demands for government services? No impacts.
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? No impacts.
- (h) Utilities? No impacts.
- (i) Transportation? No impacts.
- (j) Safety? No impacts.
- (k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? None identified.

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

Secondary Impacts: No secondary impacts identified.

Cumulative Impacts: No cumulative impacts identified.

3. Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:

No mitigation required. No stipulations involved.

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:

Proposed Action: Grant Applicant's Application for Change of Appropriation Water Right adding two places of use.

No action alternative: The project has already been completed. No action would result in the Applicant either removing the project, filing a 602, or continuing to use the new system without a water right reflecting the new places of use.

PART III. Conclusion

1. Preferred Alternative

Proposed Action: Grant Applicant's Application for Change of Appropriation Water Right adding two places of use.

2. Comments and Responses

None.

3

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: No impacts were identified so an EA is the appropriate level.

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

Name: Tyler Lystash

Title: Water Resource Specialist

Date: 3/16/2018