

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: USA Department of Interior,
Bureau of Land Management
920 NE Main St
Lewistown, MT 59457
2. Type of action: Application to Change an Existing Water Right No. 40C 30118609
3. Water source name: Groundwater

Location affected by project: SWNWNE and SWSWSW Section 20, Township 16N, Range 28E, Petroleum County

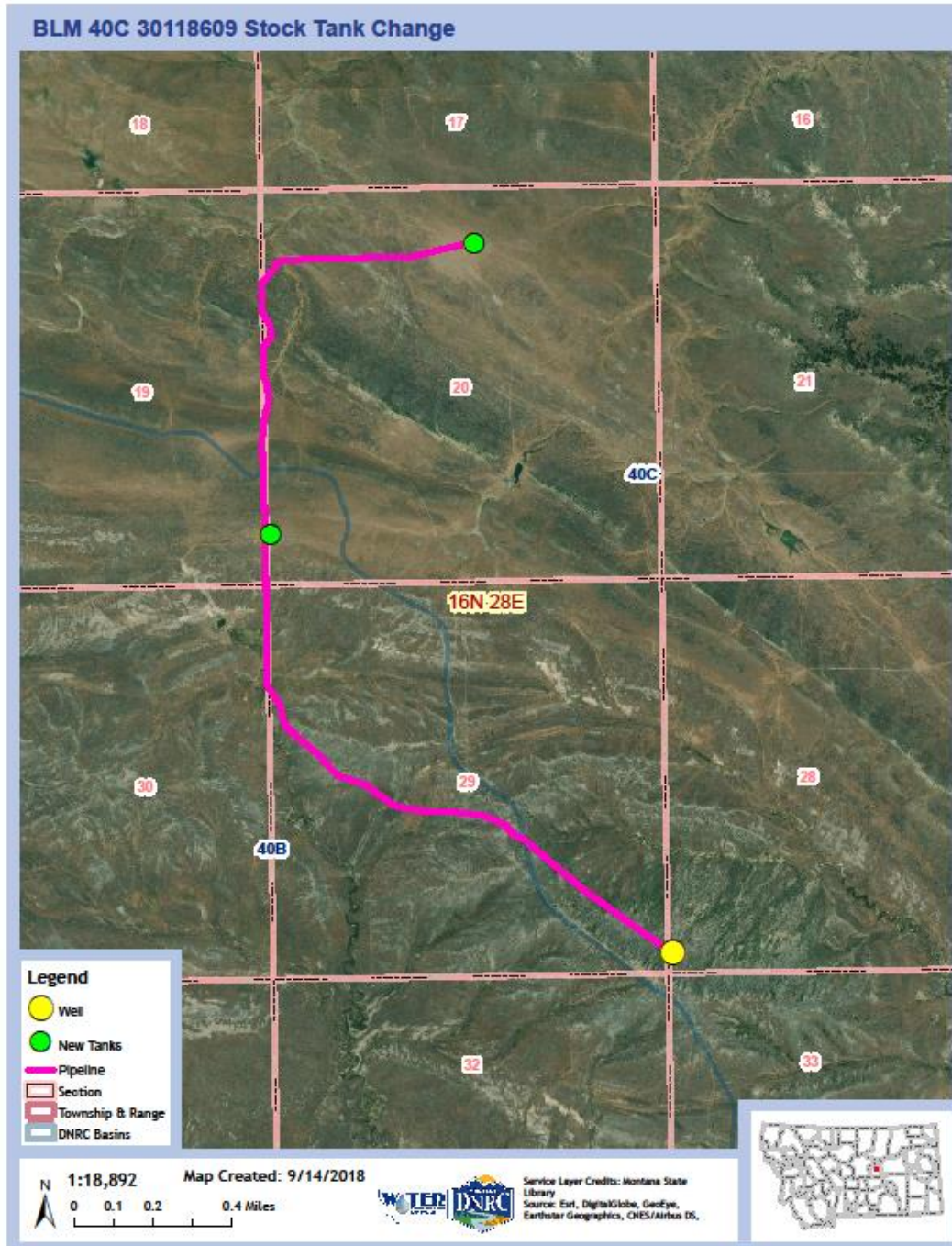
4. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:

The Applicant is proposing to add two new stock tanks and remove the existing stock tank for better pasture management and more efficient grazing. The proposed places of use are in the SWNWNE and SWSWSW Section 20, Township 16N, Range 28E, Petroleum County. The period of diversion and use will continue to be January 1-December 31. The point of diversion is a well located in the SWSWSW Section 28, Township 16N, Range 28E, Petroleum County.

The DNRC shall issue a change authorization if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-402, MCA, are met.

5. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:

Montana Natural Heritage Program
National Wetlands Inventory
USDA NRCS 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 or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.

Determination: N/A-The source is groundwater.

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.

Determination: N/A-The source is groundwater.

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: No impacts identified. The existing Ground Water Certificate was issued for use of water by 100 animal units from January 1-December 31. There will be no change in the period of diversion or an increase in the number of animal units being watered under this water right.

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.

Determination: No impacts identified. The means of diversion have already been completed.

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.”

Determination: No significant impact

The Montana Natural Heritage Program identified a list of seven animal species of concern within the township and range that the project is in. Of this list, none of the animals are listed as “threatened” or “endangered” by the US Fish & Wildlife Service. No plant species of concern were identified by the Montana Natural Heritage Program to potentially be in the project area. This project area has already been used as a grazing pasture for cattle; this project is just to provide additional water sources to the pasture. It is not anticipated that any of the species of concern will be impacted by the proposed project.

Black-tailed Prairie Dog	Ferruginous Hawk	Greater Sage-Grouse	Pinyon Jay
Brewer’s Sparrow	Greater Short-horned Lizard	Plains Spadefoot	

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: No significant impact

No wetlands identified by the National Wetlands Inventory fall within the project area.

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

Determination: No significant impact

There were no natural ponds identified within the project area.

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.

Determination: No significant impacts

This water project is for stock water tanks in pastureland. The tanks will have float valves to ensure they do not flow continuously and overflow. The soils in the project are primarily consist of silty clays and completion of this project should not influence soil quality, stability, or moisture content.

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.

Determination: No significant impacts

This project is located on land owned by the Applicant. It will be their responsibility to manage noxious weeds and vegetative cover in their pastures.

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

Determination: No significant impact

There will be no impact to air quality associated with authorization of the proposed change.

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.

Determination: No significant impact

The project is located on Bureau of Land Management property. BLM's obligations in a project of assessing archeological or historical sites within a project area are identified under Section 106 of the NHPA of 1966 and its amendments. Section 106 requires that every federal agency consider the potential effect an undertaking (as defined by 36 CFR 800) may have on any prehistoric or historic site eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) within the area of potential effect. If it is determined that a project or undertaking may have an adverse effect on a National Register-eligible property or properties, the project may implement mitigation measures so that effects are no longer adverse.

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

Determination: No other potential impacts have been identified.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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

Determination: No known environmental plans or goals will be impacted by this project.

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.*

Determination: No access or recreational activities will be impacted by this project.

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

Determination: No impacts to human health have been identified.

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 regulatory impacts are known.

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 significant impacts identified

(b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? No significant impacts identified

- (c) Existing land uses? No significant impacts identified
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? No significant impacts identified
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? No significant impacts identified
- (f) Demands for government services? No significant impacts identified
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? No significant impacts identified
- (h) Utilities? No significant impacts identified
- (i) Transportation? No significant impacts identified
- (j) Safety? No significant impacts identified
- (k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? No significant impacts identified

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

Secondary Impacts No significant impacts identified

Cumulative Impacts No significant impacts identified

3. *Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:* None

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:*

The only alternative to the proposed action would be the no action alternative. The no action alternative would not authorize the Applicant to add two new stock tanks to their well. Additionally, the means of diversion and conveyance have already been completed for this project.

PART III. Conclusion

1. *Preferred Alternative*

Issue a change authorization if the Applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-402, MCA, are met.

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:

No significant impacts to the proposed project have been identified.

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

Name: Nathaniel T. Ward

Title: Water Resource Specialist

Date: October 3, 2018