

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: Bigfork County Water and Sewer District
PO Box 1108
Bigfork MT 59911

2. Type of action: Application to Change an Existing Non-irrigation Water Right 76LJ
30122620

3. Water source name: Groundwater wells (4)

4. Location affected by project: PODs: NESWSE Section 11, Township 27N, Range 20W, Flathead County. POU: Township 26N, Range 19W, Sections 5 and 6; Township 27N, Range 19W, Sections 30, 31 and 32; Township 26N, Range 20W, Section 1; Township 27N, Range 20W, Sections 11, 13, 14, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 35 and 36

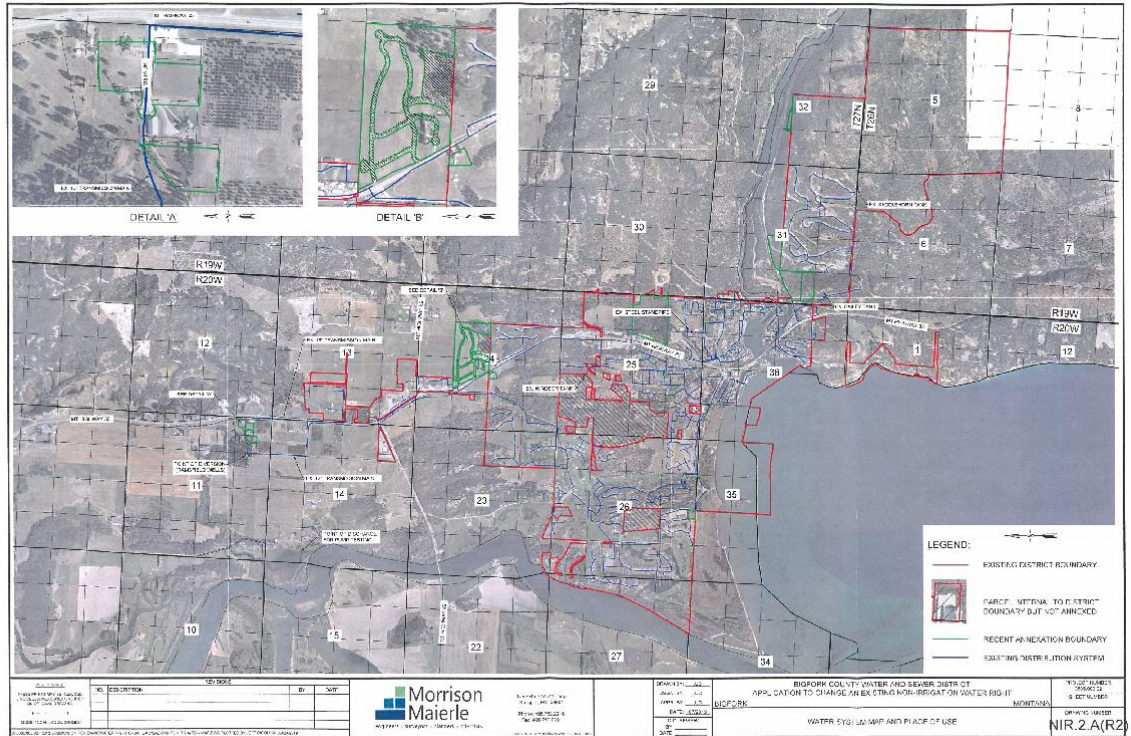
5. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:

Bigfork County Water & Sewer District (BCWSD) provides water to the town of Bigfork and the surrounding area, which is located on the northeast shore of Flathead Lake approximately 12 miles north of the northern border of the Flathead Reservation. This application requests changing the place of use of three rights to reflect the current boundaries of the district. The proposed change will also include all 4 wells on the permits, showing its manifold system. Combined flow rate and volume from the four wells cannot exceed 3,550 gallons per minute up to 1,246 acre-feet. Municipal use is a beneficial use according to the Water Use Act.

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

6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks (DFWP)
Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
Montana Natural Heritage Program
National Wetlands Inventory
USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey

Bigfork County Water and Sewer District



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: No significant impact

The source of supply is groundwater. The surface water sources which may experience depletions due to groundwater pumping are Flathead River and Flathead Lake. They have been

assessed for dewatering but have not been identified as chronically or periodically dewatered by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks.

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: No significant impact

Flathead Lake is likely to experience depletions from groundwater pumping. It has been assessed and is identified as fully supporting drinking water, primary contact recreation, and agriculture, while not fully supporting aquatic life. It is not anticipated that pumping of the Applicant's groundwater well will have any negative impacts on the water quality of Flathead Lake. Flathead River has not been assessed for negative impacts to water quality by DEQ.

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: All four of the Districts wells are in the Flathead Valley Deep Alluvial Aquifer. The Applicant will be limited to changing the amount of water already permitted under the water rights proposed for change. Any additional water needed for providing services above a diverted volume of 1,246 AF within the proposed POU will require the applicant to secure an additional permit or change authorization.

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 significant impact

The means of diversion for the proposed project are four wells which have already been completed by licensed Montana drillers. There should be no channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, or additional well construction associated with the proposal.

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's website was used to determine if there are any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern", that could be impacted by the proposed project. The following animals were identified

on that list located regionally: Townsend's Big-eared Bat, Hoary Bat, Wolverine, Canada Lynx, Little Brown Myotis, Fisher, Grizzly Bear, Northern Goshawk, Great Blue Heron, Brown Creeper, Black Tern, Evening Grosbeak, Pileated Woodpecker, Peregrine Falcon, Common Loon, Cassin's Finch, Common Tern, Varied Thrush, Clark's Nutcracker, Pacific Wren, Western Toad, Westslope Cutthroat Trout, Pygmy Whitefish, Bull Trout, Smoky Taildropper, Hooked Snowfly, Cordilleran Forestfly, Northern Alligator Lizard, Western Skink, Moonworts, Spiny-spore Quillwort, Beck Water-marigold, Watershield, Pale-yellow Jewel-weed, Kalm's Lobelia, Pygmy Water-lily, Howell's Quillwort, Straighback Buttercup, Many-headed pondweed, Pod Grass, Crested Shieldfern, Marsh Horsetall, Watershield, Bristly Sedge, Lake-bank Sedge, Many-headed Sedge, Giant Helleborine, Blunt-leaved Pondweek, Pod Grass, Winterbark Pine, Guadalupe Water-nymph and Columbia Water-meal.

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

This property is not located within a designated wetland boundary.

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

Determination: No significant impact.

There are 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.*

Most of the soil make-up in this area are Flathead, fine sandy loam with a moderately high to high capacity to transmit water. The salinity properties associated with this soil is nonsaline to very slightly saline.

Determination: No impact to soil quality or alteration of soil stability is expected. The majority of the proposed place of use is already designated and being used as residential or commercial. Old farm land is being taken out of production and turned into residential or commercial use. The potential change of use of the land should not negatively impact the salinity of the soils.

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 impact

Noxious weed prevention will be the responsibility of individual landowners. The Applicant will be providing water services to parcels within the proposed place of use.

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 issuance of this change authorization.

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. .

Determination: N/A- Project not located on State or Federal Lands.

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 significantly impacted by this project

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

Determination: This proposed project will have no significant impact on human health.

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

Yes___ NoXX 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.

PART III. Conclusion

1. Preferred Alternative

Issue Change Authorization if Applicant meets 85-2-402 MCA

2. Comments and Responses

None

3. Finding:

Yes ___ No **XX** _ 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:

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

Name: Kathy Olsen

Title: Kalispell Regional Manager

Date: September 18, 2019