

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:

Applicant

Helena School District #1
55 S. Rodney Street
Helena, MT 59601

Contact

W. John Tietz
PO Box 1697
Helena, MT 59624

2. Type of action: Application for Groundwater Permit for a Well to Supply Additional Water to Jim Darcy School (411 30118254)

3. Water source name: Groundwater

4. Location affected by project:

Jim Darcy School located in the SWSESE Section 18, Township 11 North, Range 3 West, Lewis and Clark County

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

The DNRC shall issue a water use permit if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-311 MCA are met. The applicant proposes to divert groundwater, by means of a 177 ft-deep well, from January 1 to December 31 at up to 100 gallons per minute (GPM) and up to 3.7 Acre-feet (AF) per year. The well is located on the school grounds and will be connected to the building water supply system along with another well currently permitted for the school. Automated controls will activate the wells independently on an on-demand basis. The proposed well is needed to meet the increased demand of the new school building and its additional student capacity.

6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment: None

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

<h2>PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</h2>

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 Impact

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: No impact.

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 impact.

The source is groundwater from the Helena Valley Aquifer. An amount of water well in excess of the proposed diverted volume has been determined to be physically and legally available in the source aquifer, and no impacts to existing water rights are anticipated. A mitigation plan to offset depletions to surface water by retiring existing irrigation from both surface and groundwater has already been implemented and approved by the Department.

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 impact.

The well was completed on grounds already developed by the school.

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 Impact.

The project is located entirely within the grounds already developed for the school, and impacts to adjacent surface flows have been mitigated to prevent depletions.

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 impact.

The project does not involve wetlands.

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

Determination: No impact.

The 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.*

Determination: No impact.

The project involves land that has already been developed for the school.

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 impact.

The project involves developed land for the school and grounds where weeds are actively controlled.

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

Determination: No impact.

Utilization of the well for institutional use in the school will not lead to increased air pollutants.

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: NA- The project is 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 further impact 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 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.*

Determination: No impact.

HUMAN HEALTH - *Assess whether the proposed project impacts on 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? No impact.

(b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? No impact.

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

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:** An existing mitigation plan has already been implemented to offset potential depletions to nearby surface water sources by retiring existing surface and groundwater irrigation in excess of predicted depletions.
- 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:** No human or environmental impacts exist as a result of the proposed action, and the no action alternative is reduced capacity and usability of Jim Darcy School.

PART III. Conclusion

- 1. Preferred Alternative** No preferred alternatives identified.
- 2. Comments and Responses** None at this time.
- 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 Environmental Assessment is the appropriate level of analysis because no significant adverse impacts were identified for the proposed project.

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

Russ Gates
Hydrologist/Water Resource Specialist
March 24, 2020