

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: Sweetgrass Homeowners Association  
112 Sweetgrass Rd  
Kalispell, MT 59901
2. Type of action: Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit No. 76LJ 30070517
3. Water source name: Groundwater (well)
4. Location affected by project: Section 16, Township 29N, Range 21W, Flathead County, Montana
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 and use groundwater for multiple domestic (2 houses) including lawn and garden irrigation (.25 acres per lot) from January 1 thru December 31 for multiple domestic and April 15 thru October 15 for domestic lawn and garden use at a rate of 45 GPM (already appropriated on 76LJ 30006750) up to 3.25 AF from one well (178 feet deep) in SESWNE Section 16, Township 29N, Range 21W, Flathead County, Montana. The place of use is generally located about 5 miles northeast of Kalispell on Lots 7 and 13 of Sweetgrass No 2 subdivision in the S2SWNE Section 16, Township 29N, Range 21W, Flathead County, Montana.

6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:  
Montana Natural Resource Information System (NRIS)  
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

**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

This application is for groundwater that depletes the Flathead River including Flathead Lake. The Flathead River is not listed as chronically or periodically dewatered.

**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

According to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality's (MDEQ) Clean Water Act Information Center in 2014 Flathead Lake was listed as having one or more uses impaired due to one or more of the following probable causes: mercury, nitrogen (total), phosphorous (total), polychlorinated biphenyls and sedimentation/siltation. The Flathead River was categorized as having insufficient data to assess any use. The Applicant is proposing to utilize groundwater. The well depletes Flathead River including Flathead Lake. The total volume of surface water depleted is .6 GPM (constant year-round) and is expected to have little or no effect on the water quality of these surface sources.

**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 significant impact

The proposed use will reduce discharge from the source aquifer to the Flathead River including Flathead Lake in an amount equivalent to its consumptive use (.94 AF annually). The source aquifer is the Flathead Valley Deep Alluvial Aquifer. Groundwater and depleted surface water quality will not be negatively impacted.

**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

Groundwater flow paths immediately surrounding the wells will be altered due to the proposed project, however, no significant impacts to the general area including other existing wells and surface sources will manifest. The well was drilled and tested in 2003 and has been in use for 5 other lots in this subdivision since that time.

## **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

According to the Montana Natural Heritage Program in Township 29N, Range 21W there are three plant species of concern: Deer Indian Paintbrush (*Castilleja cervina*), Latah Tule Pea (*Lathyrus bijugatus*), and Aloina moss (*Aloina brevirostris*). According to the Montana Natural Heritage Program in Township 29N, Range 21W there are six animal species of concern: Hoary Bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*), Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*), Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*), Westslope Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*), Pygmy Whitefish (*Prosopium coulteri*), and Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*). In addition, the Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos*) and Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) are listed as threatened by the USFS. The Wolverine (*Gulo gulo*), Fisher (*Martes pennanti*), and Townsend's Big-eared Bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*) are listed as sensitive by the USFS. An adequate quantity of water will still exist in all depleted surface sources to maintain existing populations of fish and aquatic species should they exist there currently. This area was subdivided and developed about a decade ago and any negative impact to the area would likely have already occurred.

**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

The project does not involve wetlands and will not cause adverse impacts to any nearby wetlands or riparian habitats.

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

*Determination:* No significant impact

The project does not involve ponds and will not cause adverse impacts to any nearby 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 significant impact

According to soil survey data provided by the NRCS, soil within the place of use consists of very fine sandy loam. The land is nearly flat and developed into a residential neighborhood with lawns and therefore very little to no runoff is expected. Soils within the place of use are not susceptible to saline seep. No degradation of soil quality shall occur.

**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 area has been developed into a residential area with domesticated lawns. No noxious weeds are expected.

**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

Adverse air quality impacts from increased air pollutants are not expected as a result of this project. No air pollutants were identified as resulting from the applicant's proposed use of groundwater.

**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-project not located on State of 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 significant impact

All impacts to land, water and energy have been identified and no further impacts are anticipated.

## **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:* The proposed project will have no impact on human health.

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

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

Secondary Impacts No significant impact identified

Cumulative Impacts No significant impact 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 “no action” alternative is to not develop this area, since the land has already been developed and used as a residential neighborhood for a number of years, no reasonable alternative is identified.

*PART III. Conclusion*

1. ***Preferred Alternative*** Issue a water use permit if an applicant proves the criteria in §85-2-311, MCA, are met.
2. ***Comments and Responses*** None
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 related to the proposed project have been identified.

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

*Name:* Jim Ferch

*Title:* New Appropriations Program Specialist

*Date:* August 13, 2015