

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:**
Dean E. Hardi & Rhonda K. Hardi Living Trust
1828 Pleasant View Dr
Victor, MT 59875
- 2. Type of action:** Change Application 76H 30171086
- 3. Water source name:** Gash Creek
- 4. Location affected by project:** NENESW Section 3, Township 7 North, Range 21 West, Ravalli County.
- 5. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:** The Applicant proposes to add an extant reservoir as a place of storage for their irrigation water sourced from Gash Creek. The DNRC shall issue a permit 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 Species of Concern Report
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Wetlands Inventory
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey

Part II. Environmental Review

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.

Gash Creek is not identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP.

Determination: No significant impact

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.

Gash creek was not evaluated by DEQ for water quality. No effect on water quality is anticipated as a result of the proposed change.

Determination: No significant impact

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.

The proposed change does not involve groundwater.

Determination: No significant impact

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.

All the diversion and conveyance works for the proposed change have already been constructed. The diversion of water at the end of the Hickey B ditch into a small reservoir will not affect the source of supply, Gash Creek.

Determination: No significant impacts.

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."

The Montana Natural Heritage Program website was reviewed to determine if there are any “threatened” or “endangered” fish, wildlife, plants, or aquatic species that could potentially be impacted by this project. “Species of special concern” were also included in this search.

According to the Montana Natural Heritage Program, observations from the past 50 years indicate that 10 animal species of concern and 1 plant species of concern may be found in the area of potential impact. Of these, 2 species are listed as threatened by the USFWS in this area: the Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos*) and the Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*).

Animal species of concern include:

Black-backed Woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*)
Brown Creeper (*Certhia americana*)
Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*)
Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*)
Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos*)
Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*)
Long-eared Myotis (*Myotis evotis*)
Long-legged Myotis (*Myotis volans*)
Townsend’s Big-eared Bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*)
Pacific Wren (*Troglodytes pacificus*)
Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*)
Westslope Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus lewisi*)

This change is store irrigation water in an existing reservoir. No impact to any species of concern is anticipated as a result of this change.

Determination: No significant impact.

Wetlands - Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.

N/A – This project does not involve wetlands.

Determination: No significant impact.

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

The proposed place of storage is an already-existing man-made pond. No impacts to existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries are anticipated.

Determination: No significant impact.

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.

The proposed project is to allow the applicant to have short-term storage of irrigation water. Soils in the project area are non-saline. No impacts to soil quality, health, stability, or moisture content are anticipated.

Determination: No significant impact

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.*

No change in irrigated area is proposed, and no establishment or spread of noxious weeds is anticipated.

Determination: No significant impact

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

No negative effects to air quality are expected as a result of this proposal.

Determination: No significant impact

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: 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.*

No additional impacts to land, water, or energy are anticipated.

Determination: No significant impact

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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

This project does not violate any known locally adopted environmental plans or regulations.

Determination: No significant 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.*

The proposed project will not inhibit, alter, or impair access to present recreational opportunities in the area. The project is not expected to create any significant pollution, noise, or traffic congestion in the area that may alter the quality of recreational opportunities. The proposed place of use and diversion do not exist on land designated as wilderness.

Determination: No significant impact

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

No impacts on human health are anticipated as a result of this project.

Determination: No significant 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 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? None identified
- (b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? None identified
- (c) Existing land uses? None identified
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? None identified
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? None identified
- (f) Demands for government services? None identified
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? None identified
- (h) Utilities? None identified
- (i) Transportation? None identified
- (j) Safety? None identified

(k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? None identified

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: 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: None identified

PART III. Conclusion

1. Preferred Alternative

Issue a water use permit if the Applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-402 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 environmental impacts were identified as a result of the EA.

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

Name: Benjamin Thomas

Title: Water Conservation Specialist

Date: 4/15/2026