

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**  
**For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact**

**Part I. Proposed Action Description**

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**1. Applicant/Contact name and address:**

LISA & SCOTT HOVLAND  
PO BOX 86  
SUNBURST MT 59482-0086

**2. Type of action:**

Permit Registration for Groundwater Use Within the National Park Service Compact Area No. 76I  
30171236

**3. Water source name:**

Groundwater

**4. Location affected by project:**

(1) Gov't Lot 1: NW ¼ of the NE ¼ of the SW ¼ of the NE ¼ of Section 24, in Township 29N,  
Range 15W, Flathead County, Montana

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

The application is to obtain a water use permit for a well within the Glacier National Park Compact Area – Middle Fork Flathead Closure area (0.89 miles northeast of the confluence of Bear Creek and Shields Creek and 0.55 miles southwest of the confluence of Bear Creek and Geifer Creek). The applicant proposes to divert groundwater at a rate of 25.0 gallons per minute (GPM) up to 1.0 acre-feet (AF) per year. The proposed appropriation is for domestic use from January 1<sup>st</sup> through December 31<sup>st</sup>, annually. The point of diversion and place of use are located in: Gov't Lot 1: NW ¼ of the NE ¼ of the SW ¼ of the NE ¼ of Section 24, in Township 29N, Range 15W, Flathead County, Montana.

The project is in the Middle Fork Flathead River Basin (76I) in an area that is not subject to water right basin closures or controlled groundwater area restrictions.

The DNRC shall issue a water use permit if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-20-401 MCA are met.

**6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:**

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): National Wetlands Inventory Wetlands Mapper
- Montana Natural Heritage Program: Endangered, Threatened Species, and Species of Special Concern
- Montana Department of Fish Wildlife & Parks (MTDFWP): Dewatered Stream Information
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MTDEQ): Clean Water Act Information Center
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): Web Soil Survey
- U.S. National Park Service (NPS) Water Rights Branch



Figure 1: Map of proposed place of use and points of diversion

## 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.

The Applicant proposes to divert groundwater from a well that is approximately 985 feet southwest of Bear Creek, which is a tributary of the Middle Fork Flathead River and approximately 7.0 miles upstream of the confluence with the Middle Fork Flathead River. Although the source of water for this proposed beneficial water use permit is groundwater, the inherent link of groundwater to surface water implies that withdrawal of water for this project could ultimately affect water levels in the Middle Fork Flathead River.

The Middle Fork Flathead River is part of the Flathead River system, which is not listed as chronically or periodically dewatered by the Montana Department of Fish and Wildlife.

*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.

The Applicant proposes to divert and use groundwater. The nearest surface water source to the proposed groundwater diversion is Bear Creek (Middle Fork Flathead River). Diversion of groundwater at this location may deplete Bear Creek, which is a tributary of the Middle Fork Flathead River.

Middle Fork Flathead River: MDEQ Clean Water Act Information Center's 2020 Water Quality Information report lists the Middle Fork Flathead River as:

- i. Water Quality Category 1: Waters for which all applicable beneficial uses have been assessed and all uses have been determined to be fully supported;
- ii. Use Class A-1: Waters classified as suitable for drinking, culinary and food processing purposes after conventional treatment for removal of naturally present impurities.

*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 applicant proposes to divert groundwater from the aquifer at a rate of 25.0 GPM. The well is 24-feet deep and approximately 985 feet southwest of Bear Creek, a tributary of the Middle Fork Flathead River, and approximately 7.0 miles upstream of the confluence of the Middle Fork Flathead River. The NPS did not object to this application, therefore the flow rate will not be included in the calculation of total consumptive use for the Middle Fork Flathead River per the Glacier National Park Compact.

*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.

The means of diversion (well) have already been constructed. Since this is a groundwater appropriation, there will be no channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, dams, or riparian impacts to surface water.

*Determination:* No significant impact.

#### **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, aquatic species, or any “species of special concern” in Township 29N, Range 15W that could be impacted by the proposed project. 27 animal and 20 plant species of concern (Tables 6 and 7, respectively) were identified within Township 29N, Range 15W. Of these species, Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos*), Wolverine (*Gulo gulo*), Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), Meltwater Lednian Stonefly (*Lednia tumana*), and Whitebark Pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) are listed as threatened by the USFWS. It is not anticipated that any species of concern will be further impacted by the proposed project.

**Table 6: Animals Species of Concern in Twp 29N, Rge 15W**

United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Animal Species of Concern			
Species Group	Common Name	Scientific Name	USFWS Status
Mammals	Canada Lynx	<i>Lynx canadensis</i>	Listed Threatened; Critical Habitat
	Fisher	<i>Pekania pennanti</i>	
	Grizzly Bear	<i>Ursus arctos</i>	Listed Threatened
	Townsend’s Big-eared Bat	<i>Corynorhinus townsendii</i>	
	Wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>	Listed Threatened
Birds	American Goshawk	<i>Accipiter atricapillus</i>	Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA)
	Boreal Chickadee	<i>Poecile hudsonicus</i>	Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA)
	Brown Creeper	<i>Certhia americana</i>	Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA)
	Cassin’s Finch	<i>Haemorhous cassinii</i>	Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA); Birds of Conservation Concern, Region 10
	Clark’s Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga columbiana</i>	Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA)
	Evening Grosbeak	<i>Coccothraustes vespertinus</i>	Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA); Birds of Conservation Concern, Region 10
	Golden Eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act; Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA)
	Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch	<i>Leucosticte tephrocotis</i>	Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA)
	Harlequin Duck	<i>Histrionicus histrionicus</i>	Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA)
	Lewis’s Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>	Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA); Birds of Conservation Concern, Regions 10, 17
	Pacific Wren	<i>Troglodytes pacificus</i>	Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA)
	Pileated Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>	Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA)
	Varied Thrush	<i>Ixoreus naevius</i>	Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA)
	Veery	<i>Catharus fuscescens</i>	Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (MBTA)
	White-tailed Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus leucara</i>	
Amphibians	Western Toad	<i>Anaxyrus boreas</i>	
Fish	Bull Trout	<i>Salvelinus confluentus</i>	Listed Threatened; Critical Habitat
	Westslope Cutthroat Trout	<i>Onchorhynchus clarkii lewisi</i>	
invertebrates	Gillette’s Checkerspot	<i>Euphydryas gillettii</i>	



	Alberta Snowfly	<i>Isocapnia integra</i>	Listed Threatened
	Meltwater Lednian Stonefly	<i>Lednia tumana</i>	
	Cordilleran Forestfly	<i>Zapada cordillera</i>	

**Table 7: Plant Species of Concern in Twp 29N, Rge 15W**

United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Plant Species of Concern		
Species Group	Common Name	Scientific Name
Vascular Plants	Musk-root	<i>Adoxa moschatellina</i>
	Limestone Maidenhair Spleenwort	<i>Asplenium trichomanes-ramosum</i>
	Wavy Moonwort	<i>Botrychium crenulatum</i>
	Western Moonwort	<i>Botrychium hesperium</i>
	Lanceleaf Moonwort	<i>Botrychium lanceolatum</i>
	Peculiar Moonwort	<i>Botrychium paradoxum</i>
	Slim Larkspur	<i>Delphinium depauperatum</i>
	Dense-leaf Draba	<i>Draba densifolia</i>
	English Sundew	<i>Drosera anglica</i>
	Delicate Spikerush	<i>Eleocharis bella</i>
	Marsh Horsetail	<i>Equisetum palustre</i>
	Bractless Hedge-hyssop	<i>Gratiola ebracteata</i>
	Stalk-leaved Monkeyflower	<i>Mimulus ampliatus</i>
	Short-flowered Monkeyflower	<i>Mimulus breviflorus</i>
	Whitebark Pine	<i>Pinus albicaulis</i>
	Slender-branched Popcorn-flower	<i>Plagiobothrys leptocladus</i>
	Blunt-leaved Pondweed	<i>Potamogeton obtusifolius</i>
	Straightbeak Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus orthorhynchus</i>
Bryophytes	Schreber's Dicranella Moss	<i>Dicranella schreberiana</i>
	Warnstorfia Moss	<i>Sarmentypnum exannulatum</i>
Lichens	Fringed Chocolate Chip Lichen	<i>Solorina spongiosa</i>

*Determination:* No significant impact.

**Wetlands & Ponds** - Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted. For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.

NA; there are no wetlands or ponds within the project area (the Hovland property). There will be no significant impact to existing wildlife, waterfowl or fisheries resources.

*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.*

Soils in the area are dominated by loamy sand, silt loam & sandy loam and are classified by Hydrologic Soil Groups A according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) web soil survey. The soils have high infiltration rates and a high to very high capacity to transmit water, resulting in a low runoff potential. These soil types can be susceptible to saline seep, however saline seep issues are not characteristic of the immediate vicinity. Percent slopes range from 0 to 20 percent slopes. The parent materials of the soil groups are alluvium and till.

*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.*

According to the Montana Natural Heritage (MNHP) Map Viewer, the vegetation within the project area is primarily (nearly 75% of the land area) conifer dominated forest and woodland with deciduous dominated and mixed deciduous/coniferous forest and woodland. Developed human land uses comprise roughly 15% of the land area as well.

It is not anticipated that issuance of a water use permit will contribute to the establishment or spread of noxious weeds in the project area. Noxious weed prevention and control will be the responsibility of the landowners, who must follow local noxious weed regulations.

*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.*

There will be no impact to air quality associated with issuance of the proposed permit for beneficial use of groundwater.

*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.*

N/A- project not on State or Federal Lands.

*Determination:* No significant impact.

**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 further impacts 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.*

The project is consistent with planned land uses. It shall be the landowners' responsibility to comply with all local county & city planning and zoning 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 or wilderness 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.

*Determination:* No significant impact.

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

This proposed use will not adversely impact human health.

*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:***



It is the responsibility of the landowner and developer to mitigate any environmental risks in development and use of this property.

**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 alternative to the proposed issuance of this beneficial water use permit is the no action alternative.

*PART III. Conclusion*

**1. Preferred Alternative**

Issue a water use permit if the Applicant proves the criteria in 85-20-401 MCA are met.

**2 Comments and Responses**

None.

**4. 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:* Joseph Howerton

*Title:* Water Resources Specialist

*Date:* September 15, 2025