

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:

Leslie Svetich and Dean Whithead
PO Box 3315
Monterey, CA 93942-3315

Consultant:

Core Water Consulting
c/o Mikel Siemens
490 E Montana St. Ste. 2
Kalispell, MT 59901

2. Type of action: Application for Groundwater Beneficial Use Permit
3. Water source name: Groundwater
4. Location affected by project: Flathead River
5. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits: The Applicant proposes to divert groundwater from January 1 to December 31 at a rate of 99.8 gallons per minute (GPM) up to 41.86 acre-feet (AF) of volume annually from a single well in Government Lot 6 in the SENWSE of Section 33, Township 28N, Range 20W, Flathead County. The Applicant proposes using 0.28 AF and 0.35 AF for domestic and stock use, respectively, from January 1 through December 31, and 34.28 AF, 5.25 AF, and 1.70 AF for 14.22 acres of crop irrigation, 2.10 acres of lawn and garden irrigation, and 0.68 acres of shelter belt drip irrigation, respectively, from April 15 through October 15. The place of use is in the S2N2SE of Section 33, Township 28N, Range 20W, Flathead County. The DNRC shall issue a water use permit if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-311 MCA are met.
6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:
(include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction)

Montana Natural Heritage Program
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Natural Resource Conservation Service

Species of Concern
2005 Dewatered Stream List
303(d) list of impaired streams
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.*

The Applicant proposes to divert water from a single groundwater well. The Applicant will pump 99.8 GPM from the aquifer, resulting in depletions to the Flathead River of 29.24 AF. DNRC Water Rights Bureau calculations of physical available water have shown that there is sufficient water available in the deep aquifer to supply the appropriation in consideration of the existing water rights.

The Department determined that the adjacent Flathead River is hydraulically connected to the groundwater aquifer from which this proposal requests to divert water from. The Flathead River are not identified by FWP as chronically or periodically dewatered.

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 reach of the Flathead River which may be depleted by groundwater pumping is listed as Not Assessed for all beneficial uses. The excess discharge from lawn and garden, crop and shelter belt irrigation will presumably return to the subsurface as return flow to the shallow groundwater. Excessive irrigation may cause soluble pesticides and nutrients to leach into the shallow groundwater. The soil comprising the project area is Swims silty clay loam, 0 to 4 percent slopes, which has a depth to the water table of 48 inches. This soil is nonsaline to very slightly saline.

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 means of diversion is a single groundwater well (GIWC ID 331749). This well is approximately miles (ft) east of the Flathead River, which is interpreted to be the potentially affected surface water for the subject application. The well should be fitted with backflow preventers that will not allow surface water contaminants to enter the ground water aquifer through the well casings. Impacts to neighboring wells were also analyzed and after five years of pumping, 16 water rights within the zone of influence will experience drawdown greater than 1 foot. The maximum drawdown predicted is 1.8 feet in wells that are located nearest to the

production well. Department Water Sciences Bureau analysis and aquifer modeling predicts that the wells located in the one-foot drawdown will have available water column remaining.

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.*

As proposed, the Applicant will divert water from a single 480-ft deep, 6-inch groundwater well. This well is anticipated to have a submersible Grundfos SP77S100-20 10 HP pump, which will divert water to a pumphouse at 55 PSI. A Cornell centrifuge Booster Pump (Model 2 YH) will increase onsite pressure for irrigation, from 55 PSI to 105 PSI. The irrigation lines are 3" HDPE and the domestic lines will be 1.5" HDPE pipes.

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

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 28N, Range 20 West that could be impacted by the proposed project. At the proposed POU/POD, the following were identified as species of concern:

Grizzly Bear, Northern Hoary Bat, Silver-haired Bat, American Bittern, Bobolink, Brewer's Sparrow, Cassin's Finch, Evening Grosbeak, Great Blue Heron, Lewis's Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Bull Trout, Westslope Cutthroat Trout, Oblique Ambersnail, Beaked Spikerush, Tufted Club-rush, Flatleaf Bladderwort and A Scorpidium Moss.

It is not anticipated that the proposed project will have a negative impact on endangered or threatened species.

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.*

This project does not involve wetlands. Additionally, according to the USFWP National Wetlands Inventory, there are no wetlands at the project site.

Determination: No impacts

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

This project does not involve ponds.

Determination: No impacts

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.*

According to the NRCS Web Soil Survey, the soil comprising the project area is Swims silty clay loam, 0 to 4 percent slopes, which has a depth to the water table of 48 inches. This soil is nonsaline to very slightly saline and minimal to no saline seep is anticipated. It is not anticipated that the proposed project will have a negative impact on the soil quality, stability, or moisture content. The current agricultural (irrigation) and domestic uses at the project site have likely contributed to loss of biodiversity, compaction, exhaustion of nutrients, erosion, and pollution. Further degradation of the soil is not expected.

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.*

It is not anticipated that issuance of a water use permit will significantly contribute to the establishment or spread of noxious weeds in the project area. Noxious weed prevention and control will be the responsibility of the landowner, who must follow all applicable noxious weed regulations. Since the project area has already been manipulated by human activities, native vegetation has already been removed from the area.

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 on 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.

The project site is non located on State or Federal lands.

Determination: No 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.*

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

Determination: No 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.

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 wells are drilled on private property. 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 or noise 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 negative impact on human health is anticipated from this proposed use.

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? This project will require the installation and/or connection to utility services that may not be in place as of current. There may be impacts associated with the installation of these utilities.
- (i) Transportation? None identified.
- (j) Safety? None identified.
- (k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances?

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:*

The only alternative to the proposed action would be the no action alternative. The no action alternative would not authorize the diversion of groundwater at this location.

PART III. Conclusion

1. Preferred Alternative

Issue a water use permit if the 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: Alex Dalglish

Title: Water Resource Specialist

Date: October 21, 2025