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:

OLD APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH OF LAKESIDE, MONTANA
PO BOX 854
KALISPELL MT 59903-0854

2. TYPE OF ACTION:

Ground Water Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit No. 76LJ 30170796

3. WATER SOURCE NAME:

Ground Water (Flathead Valley Basin Fill Aquifer)

4. LOCATION AFFECTED BY PROJECT:

SESW Section 33, Township 29N, Range 20W, Flathead County, Montana.

5. NARRATIVE SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT, PURPOSE, ACTION TO BE TAKEN, AND BENEFITS:

The applicant proposes to divert from a well drilled into the Flathead Valley Basin fill aquifer by means of a pump at a rate of 94 gallons per minute up to 10.37 AF per year. The Applicant proposes to use 8.75 AF to irrigate lawn and garden from April 20th to October 10th and 1.62 AF for institutional uses year-round.

The proposed point of diversion is in the NWSESW Section 33, Township 29N, Range 20W, Flathead County, Montana (Figure 1). The proposed place of use is in the SESW Section 33, Township 29N, Range 20W, Flathead County, Montana (Figure 1).

The project is in the Flathead River Basin (76LJ) 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 the 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 (DFWP): Dewatered Stream Information
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ): Clean Water Act Information Center
- U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): Web Soil Survey
- U.S. National Park Service (NPS) Water Rights Branch

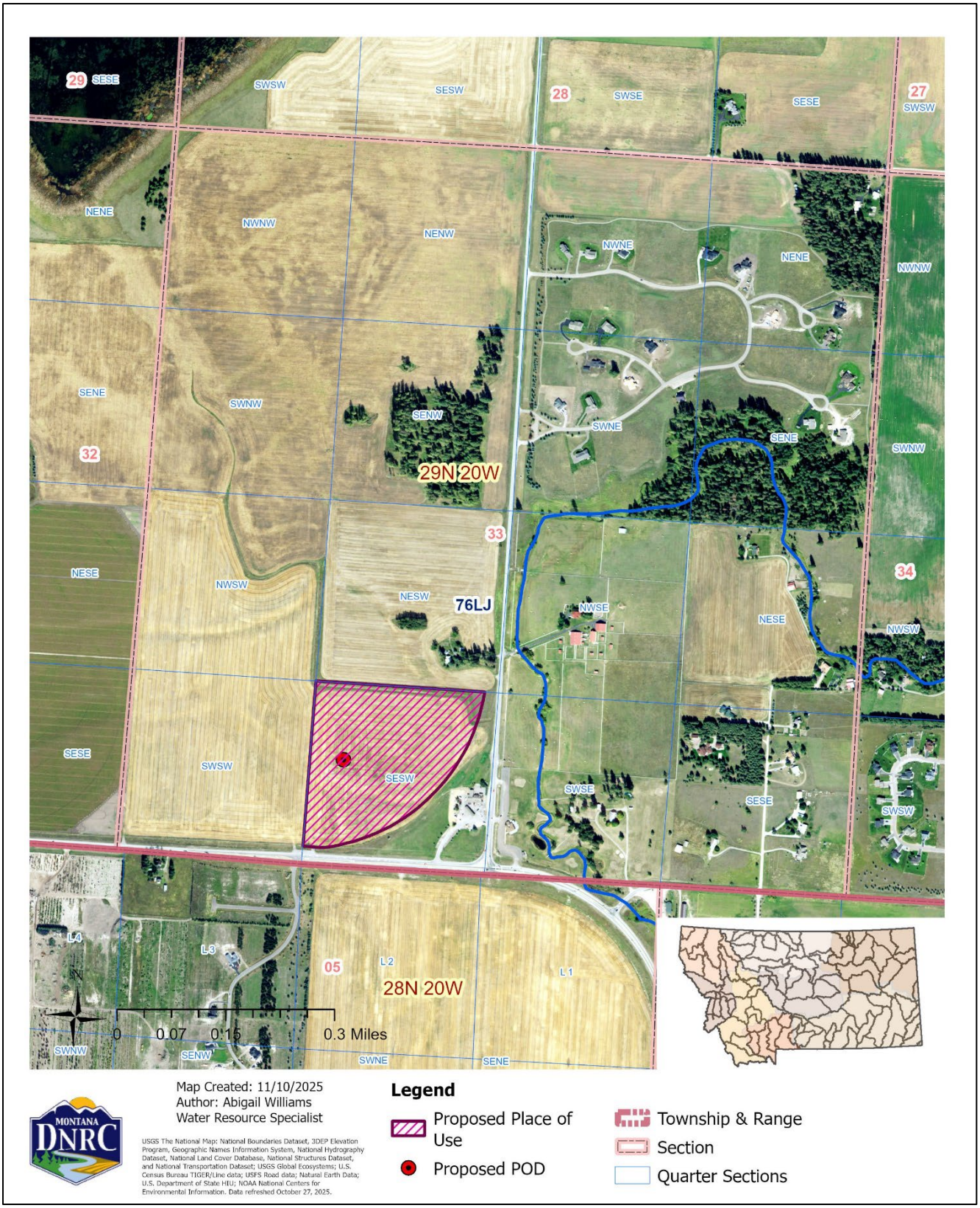

Figure 1. Map of the proposed place of use and points of diversion.

Part II. Environmental Review

1. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT CHECKLIST:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1.1 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 3.2 miles northwest of Mill Creek, 2.2 miles southwest of Lake Blaine, and 2.45 miles east from the main stem of the Flathead River. The Flathead River, Mill Creek, and Lake Blaine are not on the DFWP list of chronically or periodically dewatered streams

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 sources to the proposed groundwater diversion are Flathead River, Mill Creek, and Lake Blaine. Mill Creek and Lake Blaine are tributaries of Flathead River. Diversions in this area may deplete the Flathead River, Mill Creek, and Lake Blaine

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

i. Water Quality Category 3: Waters for which there is insufficient data to assess the use support of any applicable beneficial use, so no use support determinations have been made;

ii. Use Class B-1: Waters classified as suitable for drinking, culinary, and food processing purposes after conventional treatment; bathing, swimming and recreation; growth and propagation of salmonid fishes and associated aquatic life, waterfowl and furbearers; and agricultural and industrial water supply;

The MDEQ Clean Water Act Information Centers 2020 Water Quality Information report does not include information about Mill Creek or Lake Blaine.

It is not anticipated that the appropriation of groundwater will result in significant water quality impacts to the nearby surface water sources.

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 well is completed to a depth of 400 feet below ground surface (BGS) in the Flathead Valley basin-fll aquifer. The Applicant performed a 24-hour constant-rate aquifer test on GWIC ID 334409/335305 at an average flow rate of 145.1 GPM.
The Department determined the physically available volume of water in the source aquifer using aquifer properties derived from the 24-hour test conducted on the production well. The well can produce a higher flow rate than requested on the application. The flow rate will be controlled to a flow of 94.0 GPM by using a variable frequency drive (VFD).

Surface water depletion resulting from the applicants proposed wells pumping from the source aquifer will primarily occur from propagation drawdown through the source aquifer to Flathead River, Mill Creek, and Lake Blaine. The Department conducted physical and legal availability on aquifer and the hydraulically connected surface waters and found water is legally available in all sources.

Determination: No significant impact.

1.2 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 Applicant will divert groundwater from the aquifer at a rate of 94.0 GPM up to 1.62 AF/year for institutional use and up to 8.75 AF/year to irrigate 3.5 acres of lawn and garden, with a total of up to 10.37 AF/year appropriated. The applicant will divert water for institutional uses year-round and for lawn and garden from April 20th to October 10th. The Applicant will have a Grundfos Model 150S200-9 submersible pump equipped with a Grundfos MS600QFT40 submersible motor installed 225 ft below ground surface (BGS) in the well. The Applicant will convey water from the well via a 3-inch galvanized drop pipe into a buried 3-inch HDPE supply line into the Maintenance building. The well pump controls will be in the maintenance building along with the VFD and two pressure tanks before being distributed into the church and irrigation systems. The water will be distributed into the church system via a buried pipeline connected to the 3-inch HDPE distribution system and distributed into the irrigation system via a 3-inch HDPE connection point before being allocated into individual zones to irrigate. A 30,000-gallon fire storage will be attached to the well system to be filled annually. The project assumes annual maintenance requiring the tank to be emptied once a year. The storage tank is connected to hydrants and piped into the church building. The flow rate and pressure will be regulated by a variable frequency drive (VFD) and two pressure tanks. The well tested at 145.1 GPM but only 94 GPM is requested for the applicant's project, the VDF will ensure the proper flow rate is being output from the well.

The Applicant had Jakola Engineering do the total dynamic head (TDH) calculations. They calculated a maximum TDH of 403 ft. This was based on a maximum pumping water level of 220 ft. The applicant submitted pump curves. At the maximum TDH of 403 ft , the pump performance curve demonstrated that the pump is capable of producing the requested 94.0 GPM.

The well is 400 feet deep. The original well , GWIC ID 334409, was completed at a depth of 260ft. The production well was deepened to a depth of 400 feet BGS by GWIC ID 335305. The proposed well is approximately 3.2 miles northwest of Mill Creek, 2.2 miles southwest of Lake Blaine, and 2.45 miles east from the main stem of the Flathead River. The depletions caused by this appropriation will not negatively impact the surface water sources water quality nor the aquatic environment.

Determination: No significant impact.

1.3 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, 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 the project area that could be impacted by the proposed project. Six animal species and one plant species of concern (Table 1) were identified within the project area. Of these species, the Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos*) and the Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) are listed as threatened by the USFWS. This area is already developed. It is not anticipated that any species of

concern will be impacted by the proposed project. The proposed project will not impact the surface waters that Bull Trout live in, nor will it create any barriers to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife.

Table 1. Species of Concern		
Species Group	**Common Name**	**Scientific Name**
Mammals	Grizzly Bear*	*Ursus arctos*
Birds	Bobolink	*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*
Birds	Evening Grosbeak	*Coccothraustes vespertinus*
Birds	Great Blue Heron	*Ardea herodias*
Birds	Pileated Woodpecker	*Dryocopus pileatus*
Fish	Bull Trout*	*Salvelinus confluentus*
Mosses	Warnstorfia Moss	*Sarmentypnum exannulatum*

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.*

Determination: This project will be constructed near a manmade riverine. There is a potential intermittent streambed that may seasonally flood. There is no significant impact.

1.4 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 commercial use and irrigation of lawn and garden will not negatively impact the soil quality, stability, or moisture content in the project area. The soil type in the project area is, "Creston silt loam". This soil has a moderately high to high capacity to transmit water. Soils in this area are not typically saline and are therefore not likely susceptible to saline seep.

Determination: No significant impact.

1.5 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 this project will impact the existing vegetative cover beyond what has been cleared for construction in the project area. 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.

1.6 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.

1.7 **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.

1.8 **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 significant impact.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

1.9 **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.

1.10 **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.

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

This proposed use will not adversely impact human health.

Determination: No impact.

1.12 **PRIVATE PROPERTY** - *Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights. If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights*.

No government regulatory impacts on private property rights.

Determination: No impact.

1.13 **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:

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. PREFFERED ALTERNATIVE:

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

2. COMMENTS AND RESPONSES:

None.

3. FINDING:

Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? ___**Yes** _**X**_**No**

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.

4. NAME OF PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE FOR PREPARATION OF EA:

Name: Abigail Williams

Title: Water Resource Specialist

Date: 12/30/2025