

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: John Stahl, 5905 Mullan Rd. Missoula, MT 59808
2. Type of action: Application for Beneficial Use Water Permit No. 76M 30165615
3. Water source name: Groundwater
4. Location affected by project: NWNESW of Section 13, Township 13N, Range 20W.
5. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits: The Applicant proposes to divert water from a well in the NWNESW of Sec. 13, T13N, R20W, Missoula County for the irrigation of 150 acres. Groundwater pumping will occur at a maximum flow rate of 800 gallons per minute (GPM), or 1.78 cubic feet per second (CFS), and up to a maximum volume of 361.5 acre-feet (AF). The Applicant requests to divert groundwater between April 15 and October 15. 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:

Montana Natural Heritage Program - Species of Concern
 Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks - 2005 Dewatered Stream List, 2022 Dewatered Streams Map
 Montana Department of Environmental Quality - 303(d) list of impaired streams,
 USFWS Montana Impaired Waters 2020 Maps.
 USFWS National Wetlands Inventory Mapper
 USDA Natural Resources Conservation Science – Web Soil Survey
 Missoula County – What’s My Zoning? Web Application and Missoula Planning Website

Part II. Environmental Review**1. Environmental Impact Checklist:**

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Only include if there are modeled depletions to the Clark Fork River.

The 2005 Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks Dewatered Concern Areas list does not identify Lower Clark Fork River as chronically or periodically dewatered. The proposed appropriation will result in 251.3 AF of total depletions to the Clark Fork River, which will occur throughout the year at a rate of 800 GPM. The applicant is required to offset the 251.3 AF consumptive volume of depletion to the river. This will be accomplished through the applicant's purchase of marketing for mitigation water shares from the City of Missoula's water rights (76M 123868 00 and 76M 123869 00) The City owns water rights 76M 123868 00 and 76M 123869 00 which authorizes the marketing for mitigation purpose. These shares will offset depletions to the Clark Fork River from groundwater pumping under this proposal.

Otherwise, N/A - groundwater source.

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.*

N/A – groundwater source.

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 proposed appropriation is from groundwater. DEQ's Montana Impaired Waters 2020 Maps and 303(d) list of streams only includes surface water, streams and lakes. There is no known contamination do the Missoula Valley Aquifer.

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 appropriation requests to divert 361.5 AF from the groundwater aquifer. The Department modeled a groundwater flux in this location of 165,909.1 AF/yr. There are no impacts on groundwater quality.

The Department determined in its technical analysis that the Clark Fork River is hydraulically connected to the groundwater aquifer from which the Applicant proposes to divert groundwater. Net depletions of 253.1 AF will impact the Clark Fork River, beginning in the NESEW of Sec. 24, T13N, R20W, Missoula County.

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 applicant requests to divert groundwater from a single well, completed to a depth of 140 feet. Using the requested diverted volume of 361.5 AF, the Department modeled predicted the 0.01-foot drawdown contour to occur at a maximum distance of 25,500 feet from the proposed well. The Applicant will offset their depletions to the Clark Fork River through the purchase of marketing for mitigation shares.

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 (MNHP) website was reviewed to determine if there are any “threatened” or “endangered” fish, wildlife, plant, or aquatic species that could be potentially impacted by this project. The MNHP identified the following species of concern: Bull Trout, Westslope Cutthroat Trout, Lewis Woodpecker, Great Blue Heron, Veery, Evening Grosbeak, Suckley’s Cuckoo Bumble Bee, Pileated Woodpecker, Bobolink, Grizzly Bear, Cassin’s Finch, Pacific Wren, *Stygobromus tritus*, Brewer’s Sparrow and Varied Thrush. Two plant species of concern were also identified: Spiny-spore Quillwort and Stalk-leaved Monkeyflower

Groundwater diversions for irrigation purposes are not anticipated to cause any adverse effects to these species.

Determination: No significant impacts.

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

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service Wetlands Inventory Mapper was used to analyze any current wetlands at the project location. According to this program, at the point of diversion, there is an adjacent freshwater pond. Within the proposed place of use, there are freshwater forested/shrub and freshwater emergent wetland habitats. This project is not anticipated to cause any impacts to these riparian/wetland areas.

Determination: No significant impacts.

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

N/A – This project does not involve any ponds.

Determination: No 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 major soils at the subject property are Grantsdale loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, Moiese gravelly loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes and Newbar very gravelly loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes. All of these soil types are non saline to very slightly saline. Groundwater pumping for irrigation purposes is not anticipated to cause saline seep, nor degradation of soil quality, stability or moisture content.

Determination: No significant impacts.

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.*

There are no anticipated impacts to the existing vegetation at the proposed place of use. Further, the project is not expected to result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.

Determination: No significant impacts.

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

This project is not anticipated to deteriorate the air quality or cause adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.

Determination: No significant impacts.

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 is 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 impacts.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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

The proposed project does not appear to be inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans or goals.

Determination: No significant impacts.

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 project site is private property with limited recreational opportunities for the public. No wilderness areas will be impacted by the proposed use of water.

Determination: No significant impacts.

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

No impacts on human health are anticipated from this proposed project.

Determination: No significant impacts.

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 impacts.

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 85-2-311 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 environmental impacts were identified as a result of this requested project.

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

Name: Alex Dalglish

Title: Water Conservation Specialist

Date: 12/15/2025