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As of: April 15, 2008 (11:39am)

LC5014

**** Bill No. ****

Introduced By *****

By Request of the *****

A Bill for an Act entitled: "An Act An Act revising the laws relating to water quality for subdivisions; clarifying the authority of local governments to require public water supply systems and public sewer and wastewater systems for subdivisions; authorizing state and local governments to give priority in the review process to subdivision applications that provide for public water supply systems or public sewer and wastewater systems; amending sections 76-3-504, 76-3-511, 76-3-601, and 76-4-125, MCA."

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Montana:

Section 1. Section 76-3-504, MCA, is amended to read:

"76-3-504. Subdivision regulations -- contents. (1) The subdivision regulations adopted under this chapter must, at a minimum:

(a) list the materials that must be included in a subdivision application in order for the application to be determined to contain the required elements for the purposes of the review required in 76-3-604(1);

(b) except as provided in 76-3-210, 76-3-509, or 76-3-609, require the subdivider to submit to the governing body an environmental assessment as prescribed in 76-3-603;

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(c) establish procedures consistent with this chapter for the submission and review of subdivision applications and amended applications;

(d) prescribe the form and contents of preliminary plats and the documents to accompany final plats;

(e) provide for the identification of areas that, because of natural or human-caused hazards, are unsuitable for subdivision development. The regulations must prohibit subdivisions in these areas unless the hazards can be eliminated or overcome by approved construction techniques or other mitigation measures authorized under 76-3-608(4) and (5). Approved construction techniques or other mitigation measures may not include building regulations as defined in 50-60-101 other than those identified by the department of labor and industry as provided in 50-60-901.

(f) prohibit subdivisions for building purposes in areas located within the floodway of a flood of 100-year frequency, as defined by Title 76, chapter 5, or determined to be subject to flooding by the governing body;

(g) prescribe standards for:

(i) the design and arrangement of lots, streets, and roads;

(ii) grading and drainage;

(iii) subject to the provisions of 76-3-511, water supply and sewage and solid waste disposal that meet the:

(A) regulations adopted by the department of environmental quality under 76-4-104 for subdivisions that will create one or more parcels containing less than 20 acres; and

(B) standards provided in 76-3-604 and 76-3-622 for

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subdivisions that will create one or more parcels containing 20 acres or more and less than 160 acres; and

(iv) the location and installation of public utilities;

(h) provide procedures for the administration of the park and open-space requirements of this chapter;

(i) provide for the review of subdivision applications by affected public utilities and those agencies of local, state, and federal government identified during the preapplication consultation conducted pursuant to subsection (1)(q) or those having a substantial interest in a proposed subdivision. A public utility or agency review may not delay the governing body's action on the application beyond the time limits specified in this chapter, and the failure of any agency to complete a review of an application may not be a basis for rejection of the application by the governing body.

(j) when a subdivision creates parcels with lot sizes averaging less than 5 acres, require the subdivider to:

(i) reserve all or a portion of the appropriation water rights owned by the owner of the land to be subdivided and transfer the water rights to a single entity for use by landowners within the subdivision who have a legal right to the water and reserve and sever any remaining surface water rights from the land;

(ii) if the land to be subdivided is subject to a contract or interest in a public or private entity formed to provide the use of a water right on the subdivision lots, establish a landowner's water use agreement administered through a single entity that

specifies administration and the rights and responsibilities of landowners within the subdivision who have a legal right and access to the water; or

(iii) reserve and sever all surface water rights from the land;

(k) (i) except as provided in subsection (1)(k)(ii), require the subdivider to establish ditch easements in the subdivision that:

(A) are in locations of appropriate topographic characteristics and sufficient width to allow the physical placement and unobstructed maintenance of open ditches or belowground pipelines for the delivery of water for irrigation to persons and lands legally entitled to the water under an appropriated water right or permit of an irrigation district or other private or public entity formed to provide for the use of the water right on the subdivision lots;

(B) are a sufficient distance from the centerline of the ditch to allow for construction, repair, maintenance, and inspection of the ditch; and

(C) prohibit the placement of structures or the planting of vegetation other than grass within the ditch easement without the written permission of the ditch owner.

(ii) Establishment of easements pursuant to this subsection (1)(k) is not required if:

(A) the average lot size is 1 acre or less and the subdivider provides for disclosure, in a manner acceptable to the governing body, that adequately notifies potential buyers of lots

that are classified as irrigated land and may continue to be assessed for irrigation water delivery even though the water may not be deliverable; or

(B) the water rights are removed or the process has been initiated to remove the water rights from the subdivided land through an appropriate legal or administrative process and if the removal or intended removal is denoted on the preliminary plat. If removal of water rights is not complete upon filing of the final plat, the subdivider shall provide written notification to prospective buyers of the intent to remove the water right and shall document that intent, when applicable, in agreements and legal documents for related sales transactions.

(l) require the subdivider, unless otherwise provided for under separate written agreement or filed easement, to file and record ditch easements for unobstructed use and maintenance of existing water delivery ditches, pipelines, and facilities in the subdivision that are necessary to convey water through the subdivision to lands adjacent to or beyond the subdivision boundaries in quantities and in a manner that are consistent with historic and legal rights;

(m) require the subdivider to describe, dimension, and show public utility easements in the subdivision on the final plat in their true and correct location. The public utility easements must be of sufficient width to allow the physical placement and unobstructed maintenance of public utility facilities for the provision of public utility services within the subdivision.

(n) establish whether the governing body, its authorized

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agent or agency, or both will hold public hearings;

(o) establish procedures describing how the governing body or its agent or agency will address information presented at the hearing or hearings held pursuant to 76-3-605 and 76-3-615;

(p) establish criteria that the governing body or reviewing authority will use to determine whether a proposed method of disposition using the exemptions provided in 76-3-201 or 76-3-207 is an attempt to evade the requirements of this chapter. The regulations must provide for an appeals process to the governing body if the reviewing authority is not the governing body.

(q) establish a preapplication process that:

(i) requires a subdivider to meet with the agent or agency, other than the governing body, that is designated by the governing body to review subdivision applications prior to the subdivider submitting the application;

(ii) requires, for informational purposes only, identification of the state laws, local regulations, and growth policy provisions, if a growth policy has been adopted, that may apply to the subdivision review process;

(iii) requires a list to be made available to the subdivider of the public utilities, those agencies of local, state, and federal government, and any other entities that may be contacted for comment on the subdivision application and the timeframes that the public utilities, agencies, and other entities are given to respond. If, during the review of the application, the agent or agency designated by the governing body contacts a public utility, agency, or other entity that was not included on the list

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originally made available to the subdivider, the agent or agency shall notify the subdivider of the contact and the timeframe for response.

(iv) requires that a preapplication meeting take place no more than 30 days from the date that the agent or agency receives a written request for a preapplication meeting from the subdivider; and

(v) establishes a time limit after a preapplication meeting by which an application must be submitted as provided in 76-3-604.

(2) In order to accomplish the purposes described in 76-3-501, the subdivision regulations adopted under 76-3-509 and this section may include provisions that are consistent with this section that promote cluster development.

(3) In implementing the provisions of subsection (1)(g)(iii), the governing body may, as provided in 76-3-511, require public water systems and/or public sewer systems.

~~(3)~~(4) The governing body may establish deadlines for submittal of subdivision applications."

{Internal References to 76-3-504:

50-60-901x	50-60-901x	76-3-511x	76-3-511x
76-3-601x	76-3-604x	76-3-604x	76-3-605x
76-3-609x	76-3-615x}		

Section 2. Section 76-3-511, MCA, is amended to read:

"76-3-511. Local regulations no more stringent than state regulations or guidelines. (1) Except as provided in subsections (2) through (4) or unless required by state law, a governing body may not adopt a regulation under 76-3-501 or ~~76-3-504(1)(f)(iii)~~

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76-3-504(1)(g)(iii) that is more stringent than the comparable state regulations or guidelines that address the same circumstances. The governing body may incorporate by reference comparable state regulations or guidelines.

(2) The governing body may adopt a regulation to implement 76-3-501 or ~~76-3-504(1)(f)(iii)~~ 76-3-504(1)(g)(iii) that is more stringent than comparable state regulations or guidelines only if the governing body makes a written finding, after a public hearing and public comment and based on evidence in the record, that:

(a) the proposed local standard or requirement protects public health or the environment; and

(b) the local standard or requirement to be imposed can mitigate harm to the public health or environment and is achievable under current technology.

(3) The written finding must reference information and peer-reviewed scientific studies contained in the record that forms the basis for the governing body's conclusion. The written finding must also include information from the hearing record regarding the costs to the regulated community that are directly attributable to the proposed local standard or requirement.

(4) (a) A person affected by a regulation of the governing body adopted after January 1, 1990, and before April 14, 1995, that that person believes to be more stringent than comparable state regulations or guidelines may petition the governing body to review the regulation. If the governing body determines that the regulation is more stringent than comparable state regulations or guidelines, the governing body shall comply with this section by

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either revising the regulation to conform to the state regulations or guidelines or by making the written finding, as provided under subsection (2), within a reasonable period of time, not to exceed 12 months after receiving the petition. A petition under this section does not relieve the petitioner of the duty to comply with the challenged regulation. The governing body may charge a petition filing fee in an amount not to exceed \$250.

(b) A person may also petition the governing body for a regulation review under subsection (4)(a) if the governing body adopts a regulation after January 1, 1990, in an area in which no state regulations or guidelines existed and the state government subsequently establishes comparable regulations or guidelines that are less stringent than the previously adopted governing body regulation."

{Internal References to 76-3-511:

76-3-501x 76-3-504x 76-3-622x}

Section 3. Section 76-3-601, MCA, is amended to read:

"76-3-601. Submission of application and preliminary plat for review -- water and sanitation information required. (1)

Subject to the submittal deadlines established as provided in 76-3-504(3), the subdivider shall present to the governing body or to the agent or agency designated by the governing body the subdivision application, including the preliminary plat of the proposed subdivision, for local review. The preliminary plat must show all pertinent features of the proposed subdivision and all proposed improvements and must be accompanied by the preliminary

water and sanitation information required under 76-3-622.The governing body may give priority to applications that provide for a public water system or a public sewer and wastewater system.

(2) (a) When the proposed subdivision lies within the boundaries of an incorporated city or town, the application and preliminary plat must be submitted to and approved by the city or town governing body.

(b) When the proposed subdivision is situated entirely in an unincorporated area, the application and preliminary plat must be submitted to and approved by the governing body of the county. However, if the proposed subdivision lies within 1 mile of a third-class city or town, within 2 miles of a second-class city, or within 3 miles of a first-class city, the county governing body shall submit the application and preliminary plat to the city or town governing body or its designated agent for review and comment. If the proposed subdivision is situated within a rural school district, as described in 20-9-615, the county governing body shall provide a summary of the information contained in the application and preliminary plat to school district trustees.

(c) If the proposed subdivision lies partly within an incorporated city or town, the application and preliminary plat must be submitted to and approved by both the city or town and the county governing bodies.

(d) When a proposed subdivision is also proposed to be annexed to a municipality, the governing body of the municipality shall coordinate the subdivision review and annexation procedures

to minimize duplication of hearings, reports, and other requirements whenever possible.

(3) The provisions of 76-3-604, 76-3-605, 76-3-608 through 76-3-610, and this section do not limit the authority of certain municipalities to regulate subdivisions beyond their corporate limits pursuant to 7-3-4444."

{*Internal References to 76-3-601:
76-3-609*x*}

Section 4. Section 76-4-125, MCA, is amended to read:

"76-4-125. Review of subdivision application -- land divisions excluded from review. (1) Except as provided in subsection (2), an application for review of a subdivision must be submitted to the reviewing authority. The review by the reviewing authority must be as follows:

(a) At any time after the developer has submitted an application under the Montana Subdivision and Platting Act, the developer shall present a subdivision application to the reviewing authority. The application must include preliminary plans and specifications for the proposed development, whatever information the developer feels necessary for its subsequent review, any public comments or summaries of public comments collected as provided in 76-3-604(6), and information required by the reviewing authority. Subdivision fees assessed by the reviewing authority must accompany the application. If the proposed development includes onsite sewage disposal facilities, the developer shall notify the designated agent of the local board of health prior to

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presenting the subdivision application to the reviewing authority. The agent may conduct a preliminary site assessment to determine whether the site meets applicable state and local requirements.

(b) Except as provided in 75-1-205(4) and 75-1-208(4) (b), the department shall make a final decision on the proposed subdivision within 60 days after the submission of a complete application and payment of fees to the reviewing authority unless an environmental impact statement is required, at which time this deadline may be increased to 120 days. The reviewing authority may not request additional information for the purpose of extending the time allowed for a review and final decision on the proposed subdivision. The reviewing authority may give priority to applications that provide for a public water system or a public sewer and wastewater system. If the department approves the subdivision, the department shall issue a certificate of subdivision approval indicating that it has approved the plans and specifications and that the subdivision is not subject to a sanitary restriction.

(2) A subdivision excluded from the provisions of chapter 3 must be submitted for review according to the provisions of this part, except that the following divisions or parcels, unless the exclusions are used to evade the provisions of this part, are not subject to review:

(a) the exclusions cited in 76-3-201 and 76-3-204;

(b) divisions made for the purpose of acquiring additional land to become part of an approved parcel, provided that water or sewage disposal facilities may not be constructed on the

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additional acquired parcel and that the division does not fall within a previously platted or approved subdivision;

(c) divisions made for purposes other than the construction of water supply or sewage and solid waste disposal facilities as the department specifies by rule;

(d) divisions located within jurisdictional areas that have adopted growth policies pursuant to chapter 1 or within first-class or second-class municipalities for which the governing body certifies, pursuant to 76-4-127, that adequate storm water drainage and adequate municipal facilities will be provided; and

(e) subject to the provisions of subsection (3), a remainder of an original tract created by segregating a parcel from the tract for purposes of transfer if:

(i) the remainder is served by a public or multiple-user sewage system approved before January 1, 1997, pursuant to local regulations or this chapter; or

(ii) the remainder is 1 acre or larger and has an individual sewage system serving a discharge source that was in existence prior to April 29, 1993, and, if required when installed, the system was approved pursuant to local regulations or this chapter.

(3) Consistent with the applicable provisions of 50-2-116, a local health officer may require that, prior to the filing of a plat or a certificate of survey subject to review under this part for the parcel to be segregated from the remainder referenced in subsection (2)(e)(ii), the remainder include acreage or features sufficient to accommodate a replacement drainfield."

{Internal References to 76-4-125:

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75-1-208x
76-4-121x

76-3-622x
76-4-122x

76-4-104x
76-4-127x

76-4-121x
76-4-131x}

- END -

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