

1 SENATE BILL NO. 128

2 INTRODUCED BY B. LAKE

3

4 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT EXEMPTING FROM PERMITTING GROUND WATER
5 APPROPRIATIONS BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL FIRE AGENCIES FOR FIRE PROTECTION USE; AND
6 AMENDING SECTION 85-2-306, MCA."

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8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

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10 **Section 1.** Section 85-2-306, MCA, is amended to read:

11 **"85-2-306. Exceptions to permit requirements.** (1) (a) Except as provided in subsection (1)(b), ground
12 water may be appropriated only by a person who has a possessory interest in the property where the water is
13 to be put to beneficial use and exclusive property rights in the ground water development works.

14 (b) If another person has rights in the ground water development works, water may be appropriated with
15 the written consent of the person with those property rights or, if the ground water development works are on
16 national forest system lands, with any prior written special use authorization required by federal law to occupy,
17 use, or traverse national forest system lands for the purpose of diversion, impoundment, storage, transportation,
18 withdrawal, use, or distribution of water under the certificate.

19 (c) If the person does not have a possessory interest in the real property from which the ground water
20 may be appropriated, the person shall provide to the owner of the real property written notification of the works
21 and the person's intent to appropriate ground water from the works. The written notification must be provided to
22 the landowner at least 30 days prior to constructing any associated works or, if no new or expanded works are
23 proposed, 30 days prior to appropriating the water. The written notification under this subsection is a notice
24 requirement only and does not create an easement in or over the real property where the ground water
25 development works are located.

26 (2) Inside the boundaries of a controlled ground water area, ground water may be appropriated only:

27 (a) according to a permit received pursuant to 85-2-508; or

28 (b) according to the requirements of a rule promulgated pursuant to 85-2-506.

29 (3) (a) Outside the boundaries of a controlled ground water area, a permit is not required before
30 appropriating ground water by means of a well or developed spring;

1 (i) with a maximum appropriation of 35 gallons a minute or less, not to exceed 10 acre-feet a year, except
2 that a combined appropriation from the same source from two or more wells or developed springs exceeding this
3 limitation requires a permit; or

4 (ii) when the appropriation is made by a local governmental fire agency provided for in Title 7, chapter
5 33, and the appropriation is used only for fire protection, which includes storage.

6 (b) (i) Within 60 days of completion of the well or developed spring and appropriation of the ground water
7 for beneficial use, the appropriator shall file a notice of completion with the department on a form provided by the
8 department through its offices.

9 (ii) Upon receipt of the notice, the department shall review the notice and may, before issuing a certificate
10 of water right, return a defective notice for correction or completion, together with the reasons for returning it. A
11 notice does not lose priority of filing because of defects if the notice is corrected, completed, and refiled with the
12 department within 30 days of notification of defects or within a further time as the department may allow, not to
13 exceed 6 months.

14 (iii) If a notice is not corrected and completed within the time allowed, the priority date of appropriation
15 is the date of refiled a correct and complete notice with the department.

16 (c) A certificate of water right may not be issued until a correct and complete notice has been filed with
17 the department, including proof of landowner notification or a written federal special use authorization as
18 necessary under subsection (1). The original of the certificate must be sent to the appropriator. The department
19 shall keep a copy of the certificate in its office in Helena. The date of filing of the notice of completion is the date
20 of priority of the right.

21 (4) An appropriator of ground water by means of a well or developed spring first put to beneficial use
22 between January 1, 1962, and July 1, 1973, who did not file a notice of completion, as required by laws in force
23 prior to April 14, 1981, with the county clerk and recorder shall file a notice of completion, as provided in
24 subsection (3), with the department to perfect the water right. The filing of a claim pursuant to 85-2-221 is
25 sufficient notice of completion under this subsection. The priority date of the appropriation is the date of the filing
26 of a notice, as provided in subsection (3), or the date of the filing of the claim of existing water right.

27 (5) An appropriation under subsection (4) is an existing right, and a permit is not required. However, the
28 department shall acknowledge the receipt of a correct and complete filing of a notice of completion, except that
29 for an appropriation of 35 gallons a minute or less, not to exceed 10 acre-feet a year, the department shall issue
30 a certificate of water right. If a certificate is issued under this section, a certificate need not be issued under the

1 adjudication proceedings provided for in 85-2-236.

2 (6) A permit is not required before constructing an impoundment or pit and appropriating water for use
3 by livestock if:

4 (a) the maximum capacity of the impoundment or pit is less than 15 acre-feet;

5 (b) the appropriation is less than 30 acre-feet a year;

6 (c) the appropriation is from a source other than a perennial flowing stream; and

7 (d) the impoundment or pit is to be constructed on and will be accessible to a parcel of land that is owned
8 or under the control of the applicant and that is 40 acres or larger.

9 (7) (a) Within 60 days after constructing an impoundment or pit, the appropriator shall apply for a permit
10 as prescribed by this part. Subject to subsection (7)(b), upon receipt of a correct and complete application for a
11 stock water provisional permit, the department shall automatically issue a provisional permit. If the department
12 determines after a hearing that the rights of other appropriators have been or will be adversely affected, it may
13 revoke the permit or require the permittee to modify the impoundment or pit and may then make the permit
14 subject to terms, conditions, restrictions, or limitations that it considers necessary to protect the rights of other
15 appropriators.

16 (b) If the impoundment or pit is on national forest system lands, an application is not correct and
17 complete under this section until the applicant has submitted proof of any written special use authorization
18 required by federal law to occupy, use, or traverse national forest system lands for the purpose of diversion,
19 impoundment, storage, transportation, withdrawal, use, or distribution of water under the permit.

20 (8) A person may also appropriate water without applying for or prior to receiving a permit under rules
21 adopted by the department under 85-2-113."

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