



Department of Health and Environmental Sciences

STATE OF MONTANA HELENA, MONTANA 59601

KALISPELL REGIONAL OFFICE-Box 1031-Kalispell, MT 59901

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DIRECTOR

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ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
CONTROL

19 days!

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- Montana Environmental Quality Council, Box 215 Capitol Station, Helena
- State Fish & Game Dept., Attn: Mr. Jim Posewitz, Mitchell Bldg, Helena
- State Highway Dept. Kalispell Div., 6th Ave. E.N. & Montana, Kalispell
- State Dept. of Health & Env. Sciences, Water Quality Bureau, Helena
- Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation, Environmental Coordinator, 32 S. Ewing, Helena
- State Dept. of Intergovernmental Relations, Div. of Planning & Economic Development, Capitol Station, Helena
- Montana State Library, 930 E. Lyndale, Helena
- Mr. Ben Wake, Administrator, Environmental Sciences Division, Helena
- USDA Forest Service, District Ranger, Swan Lake Ranger District, Bigfork
- Flathead County Commissioners, Courthouse Annex, Kalispell
- Flathead Areawide Planning Organization, 3 Ford Bldg, Kalispell
- B. C. McIntyre, M.D., Flathead County Health Officer, Box 427, Whitefish
- Flathead County Sanitarian, Mr. Elwyn Garner, Box 919, Kalispell
- Flathead Wildlife, Mr. Wayne Herman, President, Box 4, Kalispell
- Student Environmental Research Center, Room 212 Venture Center, Missoula
- Swan Citizens Conservation Council, Mr. Bryce Wiscarson, Seeley Lake
- Trout Unlimited, Box 858, Kalispell
- Regional Planning Assoc. of Western Montana, 133 W. Main, Missoula
- Flathead Tomorrow, Box 173, Bigfork
- Mr. Joe Potoczny, East Shore-Swan Planning Advisory Group % Bigfork Elementary School, Bigfork

Gentlemen:

Enclosed is a Negative Declaration that has been prepared for the Marken Point Tracts, a subdivision in Flathead County, Montana. This is being sent to you for your information and understanding.

The subdivision has been submitted to the Department of Health for the approval of plans for water supply system, and sewage disposal. This statement defines project and specifies those reasons the subdivision has been recommended for approval without the development of a complete Environmental Impact Statement. In doing so, the declaration is intended to assure all groups and agencies that this approval is being sought within the intent of both the Montana Environmental Quality Act and the Montana Subdivision Law.

Sincerely,

Wilbur O. Aikin, P.E.
Public Health Engineer
Environmental Sciences Division

A NEGATIVE DECLARATION

FOR

MARKEN POINT TRACTS

A Proposed Subdivision in Flathead County, Montana

Pursuant to the Montana Environmental Policy Act, Section 69-6504 (b) (3), the act controlling both public and private water supply and sewage disposal for subdivision, Section 69-5001 to 69-5005; and the act to control water pollution, Section 69-4801 to 4827, the following Negative Declaration is prepared by the State Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, Environmental Sciences Division, concerning the Marken Point Tracts Subdivision which is herewith being reviewed for administrative approval.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The Marken Point Tracts subdivision is a land division project which has been conferred upon, submitted, reviewed, and temporarily withdrawn for cause several times in the last two years. The original plat showed 56 lots in the same area which is now being reviewed as a plat of 10 lots. Flood plain encroachment, high ground water tables along the river frontage, and relocation or outright elimination of an included Swan River overflow channel were problems difficult to overcome on previous proposals.

LOCATION AND SIZE

The undivided Marken Point Tracts has a gross area of 69.9 acres. Included in this acreage is a common area of 18.1 acres, an access right-of-way area of 3.5 acres, 10 lots on 46.4 acres, and a public access area of 1.0 acres. The largest lot is 5.2 acres and the smallest is 4.3 acres. The common area is a single contiguous block which forms a buffer strip or green belt between all of the lots and the river. Under normal stream conditions none of the lots will have frontage directly on the river.

A single lot of 4.0 acres is included within the plat as an exception to the plat. This lot does have river frontage, and the lot so defined contains the original residence of the individual owning the entire 69.9 acre tract.

Geographically, the subdivision is on the inside bend of a large meander in the lower Swan River at a point about 3 miles downstream from the Swan Lake outfall into the lower Swan River. Bigfork, Montana is approximately 6 road miles east along State Highway 326 and 209. Access into the subdivision is directly off Highway 326 onto an existing county road which will provide immediate access to 3 of the proposed lots.

ACCESS

With 3 of the lots already accessible it will be necessary to provide only 1700 linear feet of 60 foot R.O.W. to provide access to the remaining lots as well as to the public access site along the river. This interior road will be built to Flathead County standards and dedicated to the county as a public road.

LAND USE

This area has been designated as having a Class IV agricultural capability and a marginally moderate timberland potential. More specifically, it has also had a recent history of having been used as a grazing site of poor value and as a Christmas tree plantation which was allowed to lapse because of production difficulties and cost of management. The Christmas tree plantation project was conceived and managed by a reputable and experienced local firm and covered a span of 10 years of operation. The difficulties encountered appear to be well substantiated, and it would appear that real value for such a purpose as this is not realistically valid.

An evaluation by the forester on the staff of the Areawide Planning Organization also indicates that this ground might be suited for utilization as a Grand Fir tree farm; however, this is purely speculative and no specific recommendation has been made stating that the subdivision project be refused in favor of recommending such an experimental designation.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The Marken Point Tracts subdivision is unique in that it is the first proposal this office has received which falls within the boundaries of a 15,000 acre Flathead County regional study which was documented in a report prepared by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation under the title of "A Resource Inventory Method for Land Use Planning in Montana" (1973).

As a result, an unusually large amount of information is available for purposes of outlining environmental conditions in the small local area which is under consideration in this statement.

- (1) Ownership-Mostly large (over 5 acre) blocks privately owned; across the river, to the west, the ground is extensively subdivided into small tract ownership.
- (2) Land Use-Mapped as mixed forest land-agricultural with the "common ground", defined on the enclosed map, classified as a water area. The discrepancy between this classification and the actual experience in land use has been discussed earlier.
- (3) Historical Values-None postulated for this precise area.
- (4) Geology-Quaternary glacial lake deposits with minor quaternary alluvium. The nearest significant fault line is 3/4 mile to the east along the mountain front.
- (5) Land Form-Flood plain and valley floor. It will be noted on the enclosed map that a "flood line" has been indicated. This is the approximate 1974 flood line, a height that was surprisingly close to the projected 100 year elevation. From this it can be seen that lots 4 to 10, inclusive, project out into the 1974 flood area.

However, all of the lots also have large amounts of ground outside the accepted high water mark. The declaration of restrictive covenants also states that all structures will be built on ground of elevation of 3026 or higher and that no septic tank drainfields will be on elevations less than 3027 or higher. Flood plain problems appear to have been brought under control by this lot layout configuration and the accompanying land use provisions.

- (6) Geological Resources-None noted.
- (7) Climate-24 to 26 inches of precipitation with an average of 110 days per year of freeze-free weather. Maximum seasonal temperatures are about the same as Bigfork, Montana, however, seasonal minimums are 3 to 5 degrees Fahrenheit cooler.
- (8) Hydrology-No surface stream or ground water recharge zones discharge into this area from the mountain front. Area is within a very small $\frac{1}{2}$ square mile drainage basin of its own between two larger drainage basins. Except for flooding along the river frontage, storm runoff will not be a significant hydrologic limitation.
- (9) Agricultural Capability-The Department of Intergovernmental Relations map indicates that the flood plain is in Class V-VIII (severe limitation), with that area outside the flood plain in Class I and II (slight limitation). Again, such a high value classification of the non flood plain portion is at odds with the experience gained in the past 10 years. This fact led the developers staff to question the capability classification shown. The Soil Conservation Service was contacted, and a series of new pits were opened for investigation. A new statement was issued by the Soil Conservation Service concurring that the soil in the area was actually mostly Class IV-VIII (a gravelly loam), and 90% of the previous Class I-II area remapped into a category of lesser agricultural value.
- (10) Slope-Flood plain area is on a 0-2% slope. The area outside the flood plain is on a 2-4% slope. All slopes are toward the river.
- (11) Road Limitations-Given as severe to moderate because of frost heave potential and gravel, cobble, stone content.
- (12) Residential Building Limitations (with basement)-Listed as moderate to slight depending on proximity to flood plain line.
- (13) Septic Tank Drainfield Soil Limitations-Given as slight in that area above the flood plain to severe within the flood plain and along the narrow band contingent thereto.

The test holes dug for the purposes of soil reclassification were also used to document ground water elevations. During the spring of 1974, a ground water elevation of approximately 3020 was noted. Since residences will not be constructed below elevation 3026, it is apparent that a home constructed at or near this elevation probably could not use gravity disposal from a septic tank as a means of eliminating sanitary system waste waters.

Only ground at elevation 3027 or more is capable of utilizing the typical septic tank system, while still maintaining regulatory spacial relationships with the maximum yearly high ground water table. Homes located at or near the 3026 elevation would therefore be required to pump effluents back onto the eastern margin of their property and disposal trenches will be required to be buried no deeper than 24 inches relative to such a surface. There is a satisfactory amount of ground available for disposal purposes on all lots; however, it is localized along the east edge of the lot 4-10 block, and it is small compared to the generally large size of the lots.

- (14) Vegetation-Below the flood plain, crown cover ranges from 0 to 40%, above the flood plain crown cover vegetation equals 40-80%. Broadly the area is classified as a Grand Fir/green cup beadlilly category. Species could or do include Douglas fir, lodgepole pine, larch, spruce, hemlock, and birch.
- (15) Wildlife-Interestingly enough this subdivision plot area is said to be both a "small mammal area" and a white-tail deer feeding area. The significance of this small mammal category is not clear, however, it was noted that this small area was one of the largest, if not the largest, such area in the entire 15,000 acre study block.
- (16) Visual Resources-The area of the subdivision is well screened from the main State highways. The flood plain portion of the river bend (common area) is considered to be a minor landscape feature with a so-called "short view" value looking west across the Swan River.
- (17) Recreational Analysis-The shoreline band---meaning most of the area set aside as common ground---is classified as a natural environmental area. That portion of the plat containing the lots has no value as a historical culture area, a natural environmental area, or a general outdoor recreational area.
- (18) Land Capability Composite-That area along the river is in the severely limited category; that within the subdivided lot area is primarily in an area of very, very few limitations.

WATER QUALITY PLANNING CONCEPTS

Water Supply-Water is to be supplied to the individual homes by means of individual drilled wells. An existing well now producing within the tract was completed at 124 feet with a yield of 150 gpm. After considering the well log and the apparent geological configuration, there is very little question that similar drilled wells will provide satisfactory results. It will be stipulated, however, that while shallow wells in the flood plain aquifer are possible, they will not be accepted as a source of domestic water unless a satisfactory disinfection system is included. This is mentioned only because it is an option probably open to owners on most of the lots. The common area green belt is also reasonable insurance against installing water supply intakes in the river bed itself.

Sewage Disposal-Individual septic tank and drainfields are to be the method of choice. The soil/ground water elevation has been discussed in prior sections of this report. Percolation rates submitted with the proposal indicate an application rate of 1 gallon per square foot per day is a satisfactory design rate for the discharge of effluents into the soil system.

Solid Waste-Containerized green box disposal sites are available within 5 miles on both the highway routes to the west, toward either Bigfork or Kalispell.

Storm Runoff-Area has no reasonably foreseeable problems on this matter provided the restrictive covenants are adhered to.

Stream Bed Modification-Previous subdivision proposals for this project also contained a complex series of stream bed and flood plain modification concepts which caused considerable comment and opposition from those people now living near the river and below the tract area.

The proposal now being submitted has abandoned all such ideas, and with a community owned park land occupying all of the land between the lots and the river, a green belt has been created which should be difficult to disturb to the detriment of downstream land owners. It also protects against drinking water system intakes being installed in the stream which would be adverse to either the fishery or water quality in that stream

ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS AND THE CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES

The adverse effects possible from the new subdivision configuration are now very minimal. These include the possible loss of agricultural/forestry management potential, and probably adverse effect to the small mammal and/or white-tail deer range.

No alternatives were considered once it was firmly established that the ground water flood plain problems had been compromised and that individual water system/septic tank systems could be installed within regulatory limitation on a low density basis.

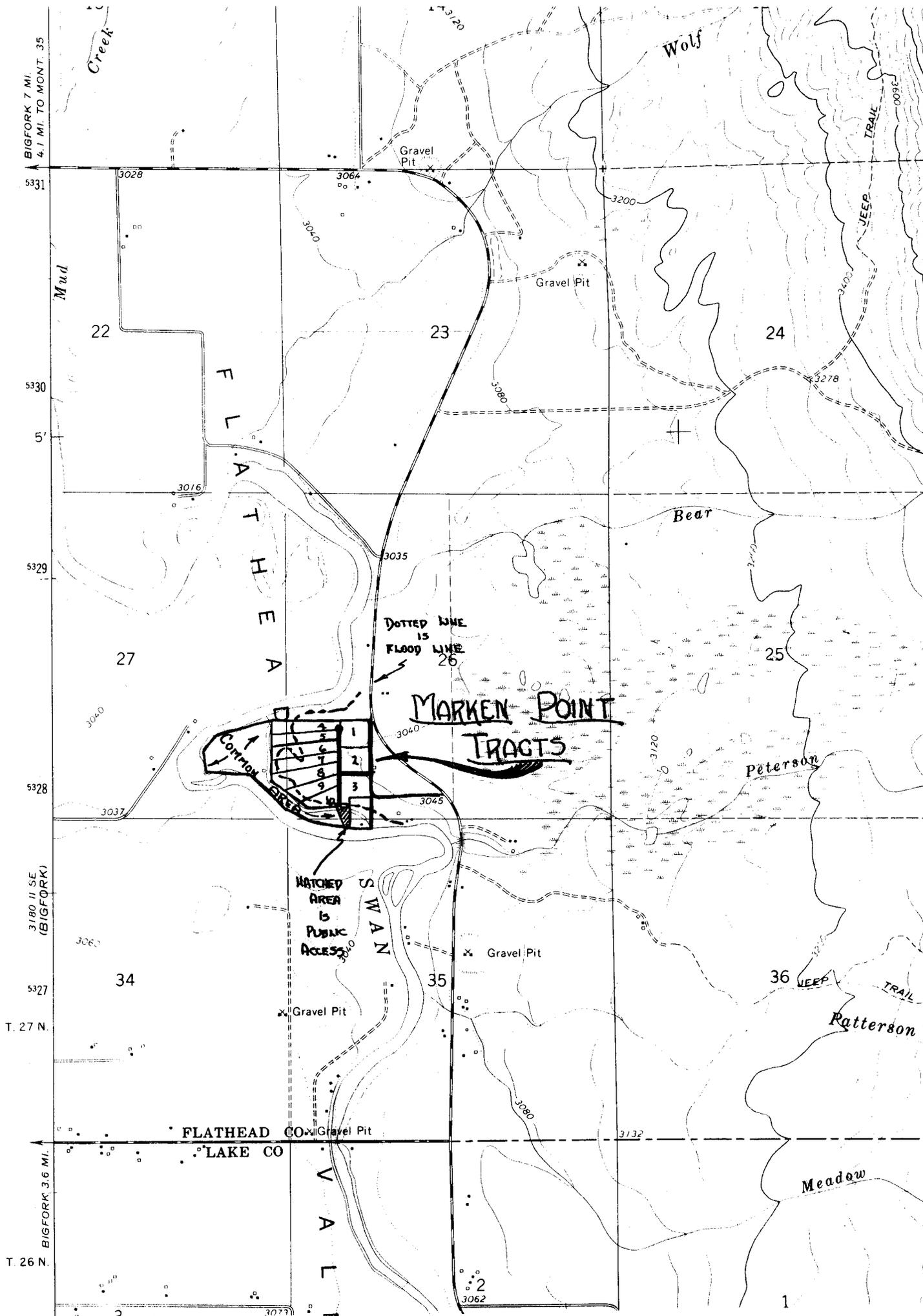
Considered purely on the basis of the facts as they now appear to exist, the action of this division has to be considered to be: NOT SIGNIFICANT.

Concurrence on this action has not yet been received from the Flathead County Health Department. The proposal is still under study by this local agency and final approval cannot be made by this office until written agreement has been received. The public hearing of the Flathead Areawide Planning Organization is also scheduled for February 12, 1975 and the P.C.A. building in Kalispell, Montana. This office is prepared to write an approval statement on the Marken Point Tracts subdivision provided the proposal receives Planning Board approval and County Health Department approval.

This Negative Declaration was prepared by Wilbur O. Aikin, P.E., a Public Health Engineer of the staff of the Kalispell Regional Office, Water Quality Bureau, Montana State Department of Health and Environmental Sciences.

That data required by law was provided by Putnam and Associates, a registered land surveying firm in Kalispell, Montana and from Charles D. Olson and James H. Miller developers from Polson, Montana. Mr. Jack Cloninger of the Soil Conservation Service in Kalispell, Montana provided special studies data on the agricultural status and soil condition at the subdivision site.

As was noted in the body of the report the staff of the Flathead County Areawide Planning Organization contributed to the environmental assessment study and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation contributed, indirectly, to the evaluation of this environmental assessment.



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