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Department of Health and Environmental Sciences

STATE OF MONTANA HELENA, MONTANA 59601

June 17, 1975

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John S. Anderson M.D.
DIRECTOR

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL

Re: Homestake Ranch,
Cascade County, Montana

Honorable Thomas Judge, Governor, State of Montana, Helena
Citizens Advocate, Helena
Environmental Quality Council, Helena
Montana Fish and Game Department, Helena
Montana Outdoors, c/o Fish and Game Department, Helena
Department of Highways, Helena
Department of Intergovernmental Relations, Division of Planning, Helena
Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Helena
Superintendent of Public Instruction, Helena
Department of State Lands, Helena
Montana State Library, Helena
Board of County Commissioners, Courthouse, Great Falls
City-County Planning Board, Civic Center, Great Falls
City-County Health Department, 1130 17th Avenue South, Great Falls
Environmental Information Center, Box 12, Helena
C. W. Gonder, 823 East Call Street, Livingston
Mrs. Vel Jansen, 430 South Sixth, Livingston
Mrs. Winifred Lucky, 420 South Sixth, Livingston
Mary Lee Reese, League of Women Voters, 29 South Alta, Helena
Doris Milner, Montana Wilderness Association, Route 1, Box 1410, Hamilton
Northern Rockies Action Group, #9 Placer Street, Helena
Paul T. Richards, 902 North Park, Helena
John Schillinger, Microbiology Department, Montana State University, Bozeman
Concerned Citizens for a Quality Environment, c/o Ron Erickson, University of Montana, Missoula
Larry Uman, Environmental Studies Department, University of Montana, Missoula
Student Environmental Research Center, University of Montana, Room 212, Venture Center, Missoula
Rick Graetz, Box 894, Helena
Phil Korell, Architect, 600 25th Street North, Great Falls
Superintendent, Great Falls Public Schools, Box 2428, Great Falls
Superintendent of Schools, Courthouse, Great Falls
Dave Roehm, Prairie Nest Ranch, Highwood Star Route, Great Falls
Northern Testing Laboratory, 528 Smelter Avenue, Great Falls
Norman L. Newhall, III, Scott, Linnell, Neill & Newhall, Montana Building, Great Falls
Donald Henen, 4033 6th Avenue South, Great Falls
Drapes Engineering, Eklund Building, Great Falls

Enclosed is an agency impact determination that has been prepared for Homestake Ranch, a proposed subdivision in Cascade County, Montana.

Subdivision plans and specifications have been submitted to the Department of Health and Environmental Sciences for approval of water supply, sewage disposal, and solid waste disposal systems.

This determination defines the project and specifies those conditions under which the subdivision will receive approval without the development of an environmental impact statement. This determination is intended to assure all interested governmental agencies and public groups that this approval is being sought within the intent of both the Montana Environmental Policy Act and the Montana subdivision laws.

Sincerely yours,

D. G. Willems

D. G. Willems, P.E., Chief
Water Quality Bureau
Environmental Sciences Division

DGW:APK:sh
Enclosure
cc: Mr. Wake
Mr. Carmody

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

June 17, 1975

An Agency Impact Determination For

HOMESTAKE RANCH
A Proposed Subdivision in Cascade 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 subdivisions, Section 69-5001 through 69-5009; and the act to control water pollution, Section 69-4801 through 69-4827, the following agency impact determination is prepared by the Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, Environmental Sciences Division, Water Quality Bureau, concerning a proposed subdivision in Cascade County, Montana, for which a request has been received requesting subdivision plat approval.

The purpose of this agency impact determination is to inform all interested governmental agencies and the concerned public of the Water Quality Bureau's intent not to prepare a full environmental impact statement. This document will be circulated for ten days.

Location

The proposed development is located approximately eight miles east of Great Falls on the Highwood Highway in the North 1/2 of Section 10, Township 20 North, Range 5 East, M.P.M. Homestake Ranch encompasses 129.97 acres divided into 19 one-acre circular lots. The lots are joined by common property which is to be held by a lotowners' association. Each lot would be used for a single-family residence only.

Box Elder Creek flows through the property in a north-south direction. There are three embankment ponds on the property to be used for recreational purposes. It is anticipated that water will be present the year-round. The final plat has relocated all lots out of the designated 100-year flood plain, and all stream crossings have been eliminated.

The 129 acres have been used for grazing with a small amount of hayland. Only a relatively small area of the 19 residential lots would project onto the hayland.

Water Supply

Individual drilled wells would be used as a water supply. A 285-foot deep well exists on the property yielding 50 gallons

per minute. Biological and chemical laboratory tests indicate the water to be biologically safe for human consumption and of good chemical quality. The existence of this well and the results of the laboratory tests are deemed adequate evidence that a water supply sufficient in terms of quality, quantity and dependability is available to assure an adequate supply.

Sewage Disposal

Soils on the proposed subdivision are the Pendroy-Marias Association formed from glacial lake deposits. These are generally classed LL by the unified classification system. Since they have a low hydraulic conductivity, the use of subsurface drainfields is questionable. Therefore, the use of evapotranspiration systems is proposed.

Solid Waste Disposal

The property is in the Cascade County solid waste district and each homeowner has the right to dipose of his solid waste at an approved site. The nearest landfill is in Sandcoulee. There is a compulsory charge of $18 per year to be paid to Cascade County by each homeowner.

Services

Electrical power supply and telephone service lines are to be underground. No natural gas is available. Fire protection is from the Belt Rural Fire District, and police protection will be by the Cascade County Sheriff's Department. Ambulance service is available from Bicsak Ambulance Service. The development is in the Belt elementary school district and the Great Falls high school district.

Environmental Assessment

The primary environmental impacts would be those associated with the conversion of agricultural land to residential. However, the hayland will be preserved as most of the development would be on the native range. Visual impacts would be minimized by the restrictive covenants, but there would be a change of a rural landscape to a suburban landscape.

There might be a dust problem from gravel roads in the area, but this could be corrected by residents of the proposed subdivision through the homeowners' association.

If the residents of the subdivision came from outside Montana, they would cause an additional consumption of electrical energy.

Since this is not a development designed to appeal to the second-home market, many of the social and environmental impacts will be minimized since residents would need a homesite some other place if not at Homestake Ranch.

Alternatives Available to this Department

(a) Approve the subdivision plat as requested.

(b) Deny approval of the subdivision plat.

(c) Approve the subdivision plat under certain conditions.

A review of all available data on this development does not indicate the need for any special conditions to be placed upon the approval of the subdivision plat. One alternative that might be preferred by some would be the installation of a community water and sewer system, but this does not seem necessary in the case of Homestake Ranch as water can be supplied and sewage disposed of without contamination of ground or surface waters.

Conclusions

There does not appear to be any reason why the proposed subdivision should not be approved. The information currently available will be reviewed in light of comments received following publication of this document. If there is no substantive information received to the contrary, the plat will be approved with the understanding that the Cascade County sanitarians will inspect and approve the installation and operation of all sewer and water systems.

This document prepared by Alfred P. Keppner, B.S.F., M.S., Soils Scientist, Water Quality Bureau from information provided by Korell & Iversen, Architects; Scott, Linnell, Neill and Newhall, Attorneys; Donald Henen, Land Surveyor; Drapes Engineering; Northern Testing Laboratories; and the City-County Health Department in Great Falls.

THIS MAP DRAWN FROM OVERLAY OF GEOLOGICAL SURVEY MAP

WATER QUALITY BUREAU
STATE DEPT. OF HEALTH & ENV. SCIENCES

DEADHEAD

Environmental Quality
Council
Helena, MT 59601

John W. Reuss
XXXXXXXXXXXXX

March 20, 1975

Mr. Bill Branch, Planner
Great Falls City-County Planning Board
Room 108, Civic Center Building
Great Falls, Montana 59401

Dear Mr. Branch:

Our staff has reviewed the application for approval of the preliminary plat of Homestake Ranch subdivision near Great Falls, pursuant to a request by the Local Planning Services Bureau of the Montana Department of Intergovernmental Relations.

It seems apparent that Homestake Ranch subdivision will contribute to the continued sprawl of Great Falls and will place additional development pressure on the surrounding ranch land, leading to the loss of more agriculturally productive land and to increased costs to Cascade County taxpayers for public services, including schools and roads. A detailed exposition of the costs of this process can be found in The Costs of Sprawl, Detailed Cost Analysis, prepared for the President's Council on Environmental Quality and other agencies by the Real Estate Research Corporation. (Report obtainable from U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, Stock #4111-00021; $2.90.)

It seems additionally apparent that Homestake Ranch will not help ease the increasingly tight housing market for low and moderate income consumers who would balk at $75 a month for a "homeowners' association" to say nothing of the costs of commuting. Approval of Homestake Ranch as proposed will add to increases in the consumer price index, the pressure to construct mobile housing elsewhere and will contribute to the unnecessary waste of energy resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this proposal.

Sincerely,

Ronald J. Schleyer
EIS Coordinator

cc: Division of Planning, IGR
RJS/cnc