Department of Health and Environmental Sciences
STATE OF MONTANA HELENA, MONTANA 59601

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PRELIMINARY ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW
FOR THE
HARRY JOHNSON FEEDLOT

Pursuant to the Montana Administrative Code, Section 16-2.2(2)-P2030 (Rule IV), the following preliminary environmental review has been prepared by the Department of Health and Environmental Sciences concerning the Johnson Ranch and a request by Mr. Harry Johnson for a waste discharge permit for the animal confinement facility located north of Kalispell, Montana.

The purpose of this preliminary environmental review is to inform all interested governmental agencies, public groups, or individuals of the proposed action and to determine whether or not the action may have a significant effect on the human environment. This preliminary environmental review will be circulated for a period of ten days at which time a decision will be made as to our future action. If you care to comment on this proposed action, please do so within that allotted time.

The animal confinement facility around which this action is centered is located in Sec. 15, T. 29 N., R. 21 W., of Flathead County. The feeding is conducted at two locations within that section, one being in the SE¼ of the NE¼ and the other being located in the SW¼ of that same section. The site is located approximately seven miles northeast of Kalispell and is indicated on figure no. 1.

This site has been utilized since 1965 as an animal confinement facility. At times as many as 9,000 head of cattle were held in confinement at the previously mentioned location. In recent years, the number of animals held in confinement has been significantly less with use being

limited to approximately 1,500 head. Mr. Harry Johnson, however, proposes to increase the number of animals held in confinement over existing levels to a maximum of 2,000 head. Figures 2 and 3 indicate which pens within the animal confinement facility are proposed to be used in the future. The facility, if used as proposed, would encompass approximately 60 acres. This area is quite flat with slopes of approximately 0 to 1%. Soil characteristics are a fine, sandy loam on the surface with a gravelly subsurface. Groundwater depth varies between four and ten feet. Surface runoff which would be generated from precipitation falling directly on the feeding area would be contained by existing dikes. In the case of feedlot no. 1, pens 2 through 8 and 9 through 16 would be the only ones used for feeding purposes. Surface runoff from these pens would be contained behind a dike which parallels Spring Creek on the northwest corner of the feeding operation. This dike is approximately 100 feet from the creek itself. In the case of feedlot no. 2, surface runoff from the feeding area is prevented from reaching Spring Creek due to the adjacent roadway. Only pens 31 through 34 will be used for feeding purposes.

Surface runoff and livestock waste which accumulates in the control facilities will be removed as necessary to maintain maximum storage capacity. The waste material from the control facilities, as well as from the feeding area itself, will be disposed of on surrounding agricultural land. Approximately 1,300 acres of such land is available for waste disposal. This material would then be utilized for its nutrient value by the crops that are grown with little, if any, detrimental effects to either the soil or the growing crops.

Any animal confinement facility such as this will have an effect on the surrounding environment, but adverse environmental effects can be minimized through adherence to a good waste management program. As previously stated, surface runoff which could be expected from the feeding area following a 10-year, 24-hour rainfall event should be prevented from reaching state waters. There is, however, some concern regarding possible impact of this facility on groundwater in the area. To monitor this situation, a minimum of four observation wells will be installed, two on either side of feedlot no. 1. The owner or operator of this facility will be required to monitor the quality of the groundwater in that area in accordance with a schedule arrived at by Water Quality Bureau personnel. If the results of this sampling indicate that quality of the groundwater is adversely being affected by the animal confinement facility, the feeding areas will be cleaned and lined as necessary with a high clay material which will prevent downward percolation of waste materials.

Flies around the animal confinement facility will be controlled through a baiting and/or spraying program. Dead animals will be disposed of at the Flathead County sanitary landfill.

Past operation of this facility at the maximum capacity of approximately 5,000 animals did result in significant adverse water quality.

Livestock waste was carried by surface runoff from several pens directly into Spring Creek causing a reduction in water quality. To eliminate or minimize to the greatest extent possible the adverse environmental impact from this facility, a number of pens will no longer be used for livestock feeding. By eliminating these pens, the surface runoff from the remaining pens will be contained and prevented from reaching state waters. Also, as previously indicated, groundwater quality will be monitored to determine any adverse impact.

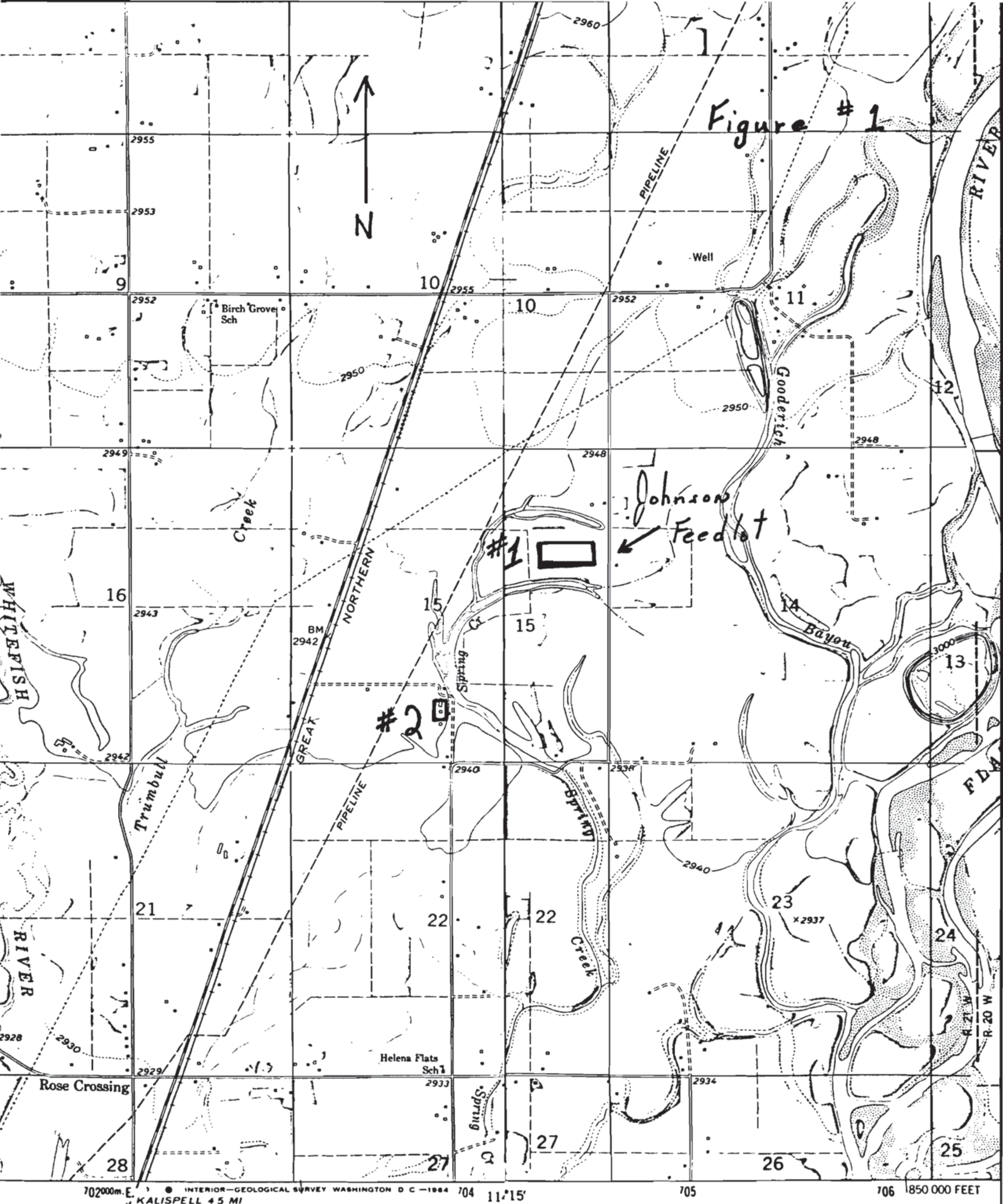
The entire area surrounding the site of this animal confinement facility is utilized primarily for agricultural production. There are no known historical or archaeological sites which would in any way be affected by the operation and the proposed increase in numbers and should, therefore, place no unusual demands on other environmental resources. If the waste management program as outlined in this preliminary environmental review is adhered to, the problems associated with earlier operation of this facility should be eliminated or significantly minimized.

Secondary and social impact due to the proposed action should be minimal due to the fact that the area has been used for quite some time as an animal confinement facility, and a change in use of the land would not occur. The increased number of livestock on feed would result in an increase in local tax revenues and could contribute slightly to additional employment in the area and to an increased market for a wide variety of products. While the proposed action would not have a significant impact on the transportation network, it is possible that traffic flows in and around the animal confinement facility would increase as raw materials are periodically hauled into the site and livestock later hauled to market. As previously stated, the operation is currently located in an agricultural area and as such, is consistent with current land uses. While the increased number of livestock may result in a slight increase in energy demand, such an increase would be much less at this site than if an entirely new facility were initiated.

In summary, the overall impact of the proposed action is significantly minimized due to the fact that the site has been used for quite some time as an animal confinement facility and the increase in animal numbers which is proposed is far short of the numbers which have been held in confinement at this site in the past.

Steven L. Pilcher
Water Quality Bureau
Environmental Sciences Division

SLP:vlf
Attachment
cc: Ben Wake
Air Quality Bureau



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Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1956 Field checked 1962

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Medium-duty — Light-duty

Unimproved dirt

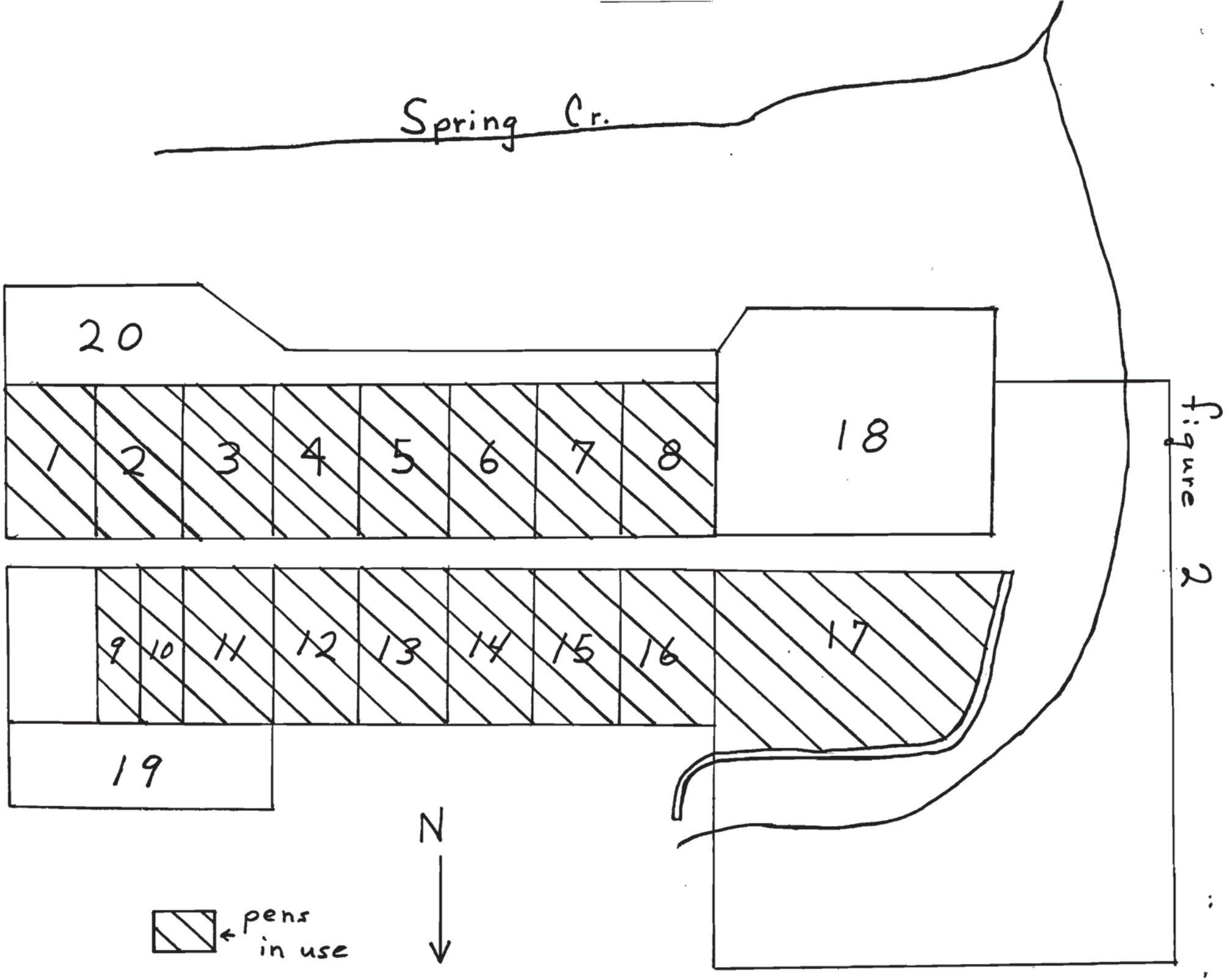

figure 2

figure 3