

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

PERMITTING & COMPLIANCE DIVISION
Water Protection Bureau
Subdivision Program

MARC RACICOT, GOVERNOR



STATE OF MONTANA

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August 20, 1998

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SEP 02 1998

ENVIRONMENTAL
QUALITY COUNCIL

Environmental Quality Council
Room 432
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

RE: Montana City Ranches
Jefferson County
E.Q. #98-2225

Dear Sir/Madam:

Enclosed please find an Environmental Assessment (EA) completed by this program for the above-referenced subdivision. Due to the minimal impacts anticipated from this proposal, this EA has not been circulated to all departments for comment, but has only been forwarded to yourselves and copied to the below.

If you have any questions or comments on the above, or I can be of further assistance, please feel free to call on us at the Water Protection Bureau at 444-3080.

Sincerely,

Kick Duncan

for Dennis McKenna
Subdivision Program Manager
Water Protection Bureau
Permitting and Compliance Division

cc: Jefferson County Health Department
Jefferson County Commission
Montana City Ranches, LLC
Stahly Engineering & Associates

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
Metcalf Building, Helena, Montana 59620
(406)444-3080

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)

Division/Bureau Permitting and Compliance Division, Water Protection Bureau, Subdivision Program

Project or Application Montana City Ranches major subdivision project, Jefferson County

Location located in the Southwest Quarter of Section 14, Township 9 North, Range 3 West, P.M.M., Jefferson County, Montana .

Description of Project This project is a 57 lot major subdivision in the Montana City area of Jefferson County. All of the lots are designated for residential use.

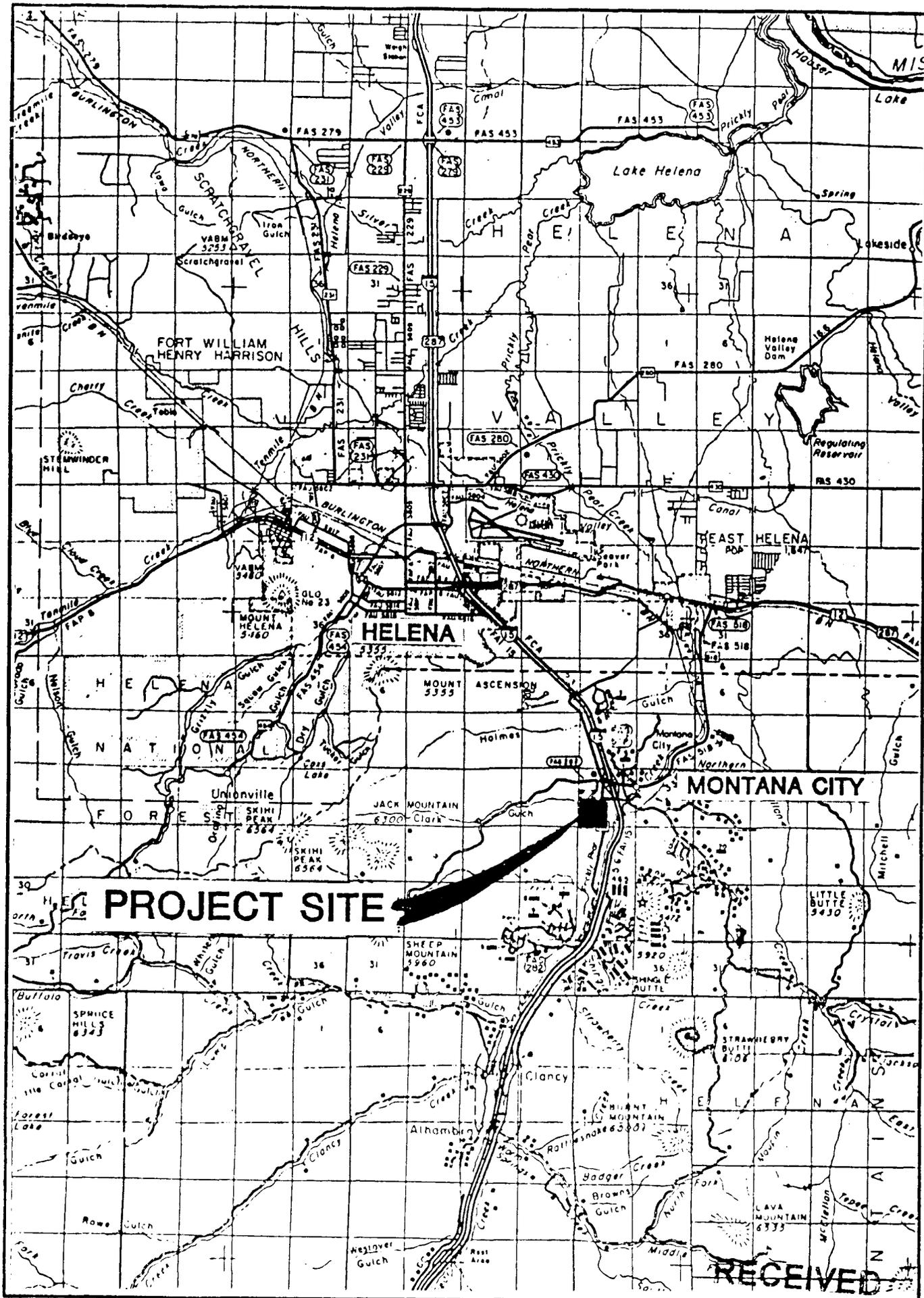
Water Supply The subdivision is to be supplied with water service through individual and multiple-user wells.

Sewage Treatment System The subdivision is to be supplied with sewer service through individual septic tank and drainfield systems on the majority of lots, and septic tank and intermittent sand filter systems with discharge to drainfields, on each of three (3) lots.

Storm Water Drainage A large open area through the center of the proposal, totaling more than 30 acres in size, is the area through which storm drainage has historically been channeled. The storm drainage plan submitted indicates that this area can continue to serve in that capacity. The Water Protection Bureau has reviewed an application and supportive materials for a "General Discharge Permit for Storm Water Associated with Construction Activity" for Montana City Ranches, and has granted an Authorization MTR100532 to Discharge.

Benefits and Purpose of Proposal This proposal will develop an approximate 152-acre parcel into 57 residential lots, with parkland and open space.

Special Circumstances None noted.



PROJECT SITE

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MAR 12 1998

VICINITY MAP

MT. DEPT. OF ENV. QUALITY
 PERMITTING & COMPLIANCE DIV.

Montana City Ranches
Jefferson County
E.Q. #98-2225

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POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. TERRESTRIAL AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS

Anticipated impacts are expected to be minor to moderate.

NOTE: Although the anticipated impacts to terrestrial wildlife and habitats from this subdivision alone are expected to be minor, the cumulative impacts could be considered to be more significant. Gayle Joslin, Wildlife Biologist for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, stated in a letter dated December 11, 1997, that FW&P recommended that the Montana City Ranches project not be implemented. However, noting that the project might be allowed by the Jefferson County Commission, she made a further recommendation for an open-space conservation easement for "all or a major portion of this property, primarily along the creek corridors." Ms. Joslin made the following specific recommendations:

"Strongly encourage restrictive covenants to minimize conflicts with wildlife, and to maintain the natural settings and habitats.

In its "Amended Findings of Fact and Conditions of Approval," the Jefferson County Commission found that:

"The proposal will have a significant adverse impact, as conditioned, on the natural environment, critical wild-life resources, and associated wildlife resources. Miti-gation procedures as outlined by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and Conditions of Approval may correct this problem."

and stipulated in its Conditions of Approval that:

"The covenants will also include the recommendations of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in order to mitigate the impact on the natural environment, critical wildlife resources, and associated wildlife resources. The County will work with the applicant as to the wording of these required covenants."

2. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Anticipated impacts are expected to be moderate.

Eric Regensburger, hydrologist for the Subdivision Section, has evaluated the application materials for potential impacts to water quality due to installation of individual on-site wastewater treatment (septic tank and drainfield) systems. As a result of his analysis, the applicant has been required to provide advanced treatment systems on three of the residential lots in the form of single-pass intermittent sand filter systems. The plans and specifications for these systems have been reviewed for compliance with the requirements of the applicable design standards of the Department, and have been approved for this use.

With regard to water quantity, the applicants have proposed the use of multiple-user water systems for several locations, in addition to individual water wells, throughout this major subdivision project. A hydrogeological report was prepared by Pat Faber, a professional hydrogeologist. Mr. Faber's report, reviewed in detail by Mr. Regensburger, indicates that there will be an adequate supply of ground water in the area in order to supply domestic water to this residential subdivision development. This assessment is based principally on data from test wells which were drilled to depths ranging from approximately 130

to 400 feet at different locations throughout the proposed development area.

3. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE

Anticipated impacts are expected to be minor.

4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY

Anticipated impacts are expected to be minor.

5. AESTHETICS

Anticipated impacts are anticipated to be moderate.

Due to the location (adjacent to Old Highway 91, south of the Jefferson Hills subdivision and the Exchange area at the Montana City exit of Interstate 15) and topography of the proposed subdivision, nearly all of the construction activities (roads and driveways, houses and appurtenant facilities) will be clearly visible to traffic on the old highway and to many of the homes and businesses in the immediate area.

The applicants have clearly delineated plans for construction scheduling of the roads so as to limit secondary visual impacts due to potential runoff from disturbed areas. These measures include grading and hydraulic reseeding. There will be nearly 33 acres of open space retained along the various drainages running through the subdivision, as well as a 12.31 acre parkland area on the east side of Old Highway 91.

In its "Amended Findings of Fact and Conditions of Approval" dated March 23, 1998, the Jefferson County Commission stipulated the following Condition of Approval:

"All road and site excavation activities will have adequate erosion and sedimentation control measures applied where necessary and appropriate to insure the minimization of soil runoff. Care will be taken to control noxious weeds and/or nuisance plants which may result from any site disturbance activity, and noxious or other weed control measures will be required. The applicant will consult with the Jefferson County Weed Control Program in the preparation of a weed control plan for the parcel. The Weed Control Coordinator may require an initial application prior to Final Plat approval. Covenants will make provision for the control of weeds by each property owner."

Additionally, the County has required that all utilities will be installed underground.

6. AIR QUALITY

Anticipated impacts are expected to be minor.

7. UNIQUE ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE

Anticipated impacts are unknown. No such resources have been identified within the subdivision area to the point in time that this Environmental Assessment is being completed.

8. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE OF WATER, AIR AND ENERGY

Anticipated impacts are expected to be minor.

9. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Anticipated impacts are unknown.

In the Jefferson County Commission's "Amended Findings of Fact and Conditions of Approval" it is required that:

"If any prehistoric cultural materials are encountered during subsurface disturbance phases of the proposed project, construction will be suspended in the area around the prehistoric cultural discovery, and a professional archeologist and the County will be notified. During early construction phases the applicant will retain

an archeologist to inspect the disturbed ground for possible archeological finds. In the areas of the proposal that have been identified as potential prehistoric areas, the applicant will have do not disturb zones on those lots so identified. The applicant will adhere to the statements developed by their engineer regarding archeological sites discovered. . ."

The open spaces along the drainages are being retained as open space. One of the primary considerations in retaining these areas as open space was the greater probability of the presence of prehistoric cultural resources in these locations.

CUMULATIVE AND SECONDARY IMPACTS

The immediate area south of the Montana City interchange to Interstate 90 has been characterized by fairly significant residential and commercial subdivision development during the past 15 years. With respect to wildlife migration, Gayle Joslin has identified the area of this subdivision to be significant, given its topographic location, the presence of a year-round and several intermittent drainages in the subdivision area, and other factors.

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POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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1. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES

Anticipated impacts are expected to be minor.

2. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY

Anticipated impacts are expected to be minor.

3. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUE

Anticipated local impacts are expected to be moderate.

4. AGRICULTURAL OR INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

Anticipated impacts are expected to be minor.

5. HUMAN HEALTH

Anticipated impacts are expected to be minor.

6. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL & WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES

Anticipated impacts are expected to be minor.

7. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT

Anticipated impacts are expected to be minor.

8. DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

Anticipated impacts are expected to be moderate.

At average rate of occupancy of rural homes in Jefferson County estimated at 2.5 persons, at build-out this subdivision would have approximately 143 residents (based on 57 residential lots). At build out, anticipated impacts, over a 5 to 8 year period, 29 grade school age and 12 high school age children are anticipated to be added as a result of this subdivision.

9. DEMANDS FOR GOVERNMENTAL SERVICES

Anticipated impacts are expected to be minor.

The March 23, 1998, "Amended Findings of Fact and Conditions of Approval" from the Jefferson County Commission details local government's estimates for impacts on governmental services. A copy of that document is available upon request either from the Subdivision Program, or the Jefferson County Planner.

10. INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

Anticipated impacts are expected to be minor.

11. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS

Anticipated impacts are expected to be minor.

Again, reference is made to the 3/23/98 "Amended Findings of Fact and Conditions of Approval" from the Jefferson County Commission.

CUMULATIVE AND SECONDARY IMPACTS

Description of and analysis of reasonable alternatives whenever available and prudent to consider

One alternative for this subdivision could be to reduce the number of lots and allow for an even greater amount of open/park/recreation space.

A listing and appropriate evaluation of mitigation, stipulations and other controls enforceable by the agency or another government agency

The Jefferson County Commission has made a number of requirements for mitigation of potential impacts through its Conditions of Approval of the Preliminary Plat. Those measures will need to be in place to the satisfaction of that local governmental body before the Final Plat will be accepted and can be filed with the Jefferson County Clerk and Recorder's office in Boulder.

Recommendation

Neither a more detailed Environmental Assessment nor an EIS is recommended for this subdivision.

If an EIS is needed, and if appropriate, explain the reasons for preparing the EA

N/A

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is an appropriate level of analysis

There are no categories within the "Potential Impacts to the Physical Environment" or "Potential Impacts to the Human Environment" where the impacts are anticipated to be major. Additionally, there are only five of a total of 20 categories of these potential impacts where anticipated levels of impact are moderate.

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction

None were contacted
Jurisdiction includes local government and health department

Individuals or groups contributing to this EA

Water Protection Bureau, Subdivision Program;
Stahly Engineering & Associates, Helena

EA prepared by: Rick Duncan, Water Quality Specialist

Date: August 20, 1998