

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION
WATER RESOURCES DIVISION
WATER RIGHTS BUREAU

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of action:** Water right change application no. 411-105511-00
2. **Applicant/Contact name and address:** DONALD & SHARON FERRITER
1450 E. LINCOLN ROAD
HELENA, MT 59601
3. **Water source name:** GROUND WATER WELL
4. **Location affected by action:** SESWSW of SEC. 17, TWP 11N, RGE 03W
5. **Narrative summary of the proposed project and action to be taken:** The proposed project is to construct a well to supply water to a Flying J Travel Plaza (truck stop/ convenience store) located in Sec. 17, TWP 11N, RGE 03W, Lewis and Clark County. In addition to the commercial use, there will also be 8.0 acres of irrigation surrounding the Travel Plaza.
6. **Agencies consulted during preparation of the environmental assessment:** None

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Soils/Geologic Features:

Degradation of soil quality or alteration of soil stability, moisture content, geologic substructure, unique geologic features, archeological sites?

During the initial construction of the travel plaza and subsequent landscaping there will be an alteration to soil stability. However, once construction is complete there will be no further degradation to soils.

Erosion:

Alteration of erosion or siltation patterns which modify stream beds or lake shores?

No. The Travel Plaza is not located near any stream beds or lake shores.

Vegetation/Noxious weeds:

Change in or adverse affect on diversity and production of local plant species including any unique or endangered species (including trees, shrubs, grass, and aquatic plants)? Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?

Most new developments in the County must receive approval of a weed management plan to prevent the spread or establishment of noxious weeds. It appears that the area where the Travel Plaza is located was previously irrigated, so the diversity and production of the current plant species will change. The area surrounding the travel plaza will probably be paved for parking which will eliminate some of the local plant species--none of which are endangered. The landscaping and lawns that will be added to the surrounding Travel Plaza will most likely improve the aesthetic value of the Travel Plaza.

Air:

Deterioration of air quality, or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.

The new Travel Plaza will increase the amount of traffic in the area which could cause a decrease in the air quality of the area. It is unlikely that there will be any adverse effects to vegetation because of the increase in carbon dioxide and other air pollutants.

Water:

Alteration of surface water or groundwater quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity or quantity or distribution?

There could be an alteration to surface and ground water quality; however, it is hard to determine the scope of the alteration--if any--because the well has not been drilled. If the well is drilled by a registered well driller and they follow standard drilling procedures, it is unlikely that there will be an alteration to ground water quality. The Helena Valley Irrigation Canal runs through section 17, however, it is over 1/2 mile away and will probably not be affected by the proposed well.

Floodplain:

Changes in drainage patterns, course or magnitude of flood flows, or exposure of people/property to hazards (flood)?

The parking lots for the Travel Plaza will inevitably affect drainage patterns. However changes in drainage should be covered in the surface water drainage plan that should be submitted and approved by DEQ. There will not be any change in flood flows or hazards to people/property from flooding.

Wildlife Habitat/Migration:

Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat? Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife?

None

Endangered Species:

Adverse effects on any unique or endangered species?

None

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Existing Land Use:

Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?

A portion of the area surrounding the Grubstake restaurant will be used to develop the Travel Plaza. Currently this area appears to be irrigated and will most likely be taken out of irrigation which could change the productivity and profitability of the existing land use. However, a Travel Plaza will provide more jobs and more money to the County's tax base.

Historical Significance:

Destruction or alteration of a natural area of scientific or educational value or prehistoric or paleontological importance?

None known.

Populace:

Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area? Alteration of social structure of community?

A travel plaza will increase the amount of people and traffic coming into the area. It is unlikely that the growth rate of the human population in this area will increase. The area is mostly commercial developments and not domestic. Most of the new traffic and people will be transients and will not alter the social structure of the area because it conforms with the growth trends of this area.

Transportation:

Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?

With any new Travel Plaza located directly off of an Interstate, there will be increased traffic hazards and could cause a substantial change in current traffic patterns. It is expected that most of the new traffic will be from truckers where they will stop to fill trucks with diesel then get back on the Interstate. However, family vehicles that use the travel plaza may cause an influx of traffic on Montana Avenue. Most of these problems have probably been mitigated during the initial planning stages of the Travel Plaza with County Planning, Department of Environmental Quality, and Department of Transportation.

Safety:

Creation of any health hazard or affect on existing emergency response or evacuation plans?

None known.

Public Services:

Have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? Have an effect upon local or state tax base?

The Local and State Government will benefit economically from revenue generated by the Travel Plaza. However, the new Travel Plaza will cause an increase in the need for services provided by local and State government.

Utilities:

Creates need for new or altered facilities for any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?

As with any new development-- during the initial construction--the Travel Plaza will require new electric power, natural gas and communications systems. It is most likely that the Travel Plaza will pay for the new utilities necessary.

Aesthetics:

Alteration of any scenic vista or recreation opportunity or creation of an aesthetically offensive site to the public?

A Travel Plaza might be considered aesthetically offensive to public.

Other: **None**

-
2. **Secondary and cumulative impacts:** A Travel Plaza might cause an increase in commercial development in the area, which could cause an increase in traffic and people. For instance, if the Travel Plaza does well they might seek to develop a motel or restaurants for truckers.

3. Reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative:

Other alternatives would include a smaller scale gas station and convenient store, or not to develop the Travel Plaza at all.

PART III. CONCLUSION

Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? No

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

Most of the issues identified above have already been addressed by Local government and other State agencies. The Travel Plaza will be required to submit plans to DEQ addressing the water, sewer, and drainage systems--all of which will need to be designed by a Professional Engineer. Lewis and Clark County Planning has conditioned the approval of the Travel Plaza to submit engineering plans to DEQ, submit and follow an approved weed management plans. The County Commissioners and Planning Board have considered the impacts to the County tax base and the surrounding environment and have recommended approval. Therefore, I think that this is an adequate level of analysis and an EIS should not be required.

PREPARED BY:

NAME: JENNY O'MARA
TITLE: WATER RESOURCES SPECIALIST
DATE: