

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

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION**

- Type of action:** Water right change application no. 41G-G(W)199248-00
- Applicant/Contact name and address:** Salvagni Ranch L.L.C.  
246 MT Hwy 2 E  
Whitehall MT 59759-9610
- Water source name:** Big Pipestone Creek
- Location affected by action:** NWNESW S01 T01N R04W Jefferson Co
- Narrative summary of the proposed project and action to be taken:** The applicant is proposing to change the point of diversion of an existing water right from Big Pipestone Creek, by leaving 500 gpm in the Jefferson Slough and using it as a carrier. 250 gpm will be diverted from the Jefferson Slough at a point in the NWNESW of Section 01, Twp. 01N, Rge. 04W. Water will be used on existing irrigated ground, 15 acres will remain flood irrigated and 37 acres will be irrigated by means of a center pivot.
- Agencies consulted during preparation of the environmental assessment:**  
  
Montana Natural Heritage Program (MNHP)

**PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

- 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?

This is existing irrigated ground. Moisture content may be less as sprinkler systems apply water more efficiently without the overwetting causing runoff. Any unique features that existed were affected years ago when the ground was originally cultivated.

**Erosion:**

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

There may be a temporary disturbance while the system is being installed, but the effects should be short term.

**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?

Any change would be minimal and would likely be temporary also. Installing this system should not effect the spread or establishment of noxious weeds.

**Air:**

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

No

**Water:**

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

By leaving 500 gpm in the Jefferson Slough and only rediverting 250 gpm, more water will remain in the slough which may be available to other users.

**Floodplain:**

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

No

**Wildlife Habitat/Migration:**

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

No

**Endangered Species:**

Adverse effects on any unique or endangered species?

The Montana Natural Heritage Program lists two sitings of *Castilleja exilis* and one siting of *Spiranthes diluvialis* in the general area of this project. This is existing irrigated ground thus any affect has already occurred to this species.

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

**Existing Land Use:**

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

By converting to a sprinkler system, the ground may be more productive and profitable to the applicant.

**Historical Significance:**

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

This is existing cultivated ground. Any disturbance has already been made to the natural area.

**Populace:**

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

No

**Transportation:**

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

No

**Safety:**

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

No

**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?

No

**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?

A power line will be needed for electricity to run the pivot.

**Aesthetics:**

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

No

**Other:**

None

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**2. Secondary and cumulative impacts:** None

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

There are no reasonable alternatives to this action. No action would result in the water right remaining as is. This is an historic right. Adding a point of diversion near the sprinkler system will leave more water in the channel which would not have an adverse affect. The water is being used more efficiently. This historic right will continue to be used for irrigation of 52 acres.

**PART III. CONCLUSION**

Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?

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

An EIS is not required. The land use is not changing, so there could not possibly be significant environmental impact.

PREPARED BY:

NAME: Kathy Arndt  
TITLE: Water Resources Specialist  
DATE: [Automatic date code removed]