

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Water Resources Division
Water Rights Bureau

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact**

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. Applicant/Contact name and address:

Missoula Westside Little League
Renny Malach
2210 S 7th W
Missoula, MT 59801

2. Type of action:

Application For Beneficial Water Use Permit 76M-Y110864-00

3. Water source name:

Well

4. Location affected by action:

SWNE, Section 25, Twp 13 N, Rge 20 W, Missoula County

5. Narrative summary of the proposed project and action to be taken:

The DNRC shall issue a water use permit if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-311, MCA are met. This application is requesting 120 GPM, up to 52.5 acre-feet per year to irrigate new and existing baseball fields at the Westside Little League Complex. The Westside Little League operates the fields under a 10-year lease agreement with Missoula County and within the parameters of the Tower Street Park Complex Plan. A new, zoned sprinkler system is designed to use the maximum flow rate at any time for efficient watering of the baseball fields. An area of approximately 10 acres is being added to the present 20-acre complex. The newly developed area will consist of three baseball fields and surrounding green area. The new well will be used to irrigate approximately 21 acres, including two of the existing six baseball fields.

6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:

SHPO, Missoula County Office of Special Projects, Montana Natural Heritage Program

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Water quantity, quality and distribution

Water quantity: Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.

Determination: See groundwater section below.

Water quality: Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.

Determination: See groundwater section below.

Groundwater: Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply. If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.

Determination: This project is appropriating groundwater from the Missoula aquifer. Studies by Miller indicate sufficient water availability. At the requested flow rate of 120 GPM, there will be no impact to water quantity. DNRC regulations require back flow prevention devices as a condition for issuance of a permit to insure no impact to water quality.

Diversion works

Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.

Determination: The diversion works consists of a well that was drilled according to the requirements of the Board of Water Well Contractors by licensed well driller. The proposed project well poses no potential impacts to any of the above listed elements.

Unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources

Endangered and threatened species: Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any “species of special concern,” or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater, assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or “species of special concern.”

Determination: The Montana Natural Heritage Program report indicates there are no threatened or endangered species or “species of special concern” present within or near the project. This

project will have no impact to any threatened or endangered species or “species of special concern.”

Wetlands: Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.

Determination: This project does not affect any wetlands.

Ponds: For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.

Determination: Not applicable.

Geology/Soil quality, stability and moisture

Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.

Determination: The area being developed into baseball fields was previously part of the equestrian park and prior to that it was a gravel pit. The development consists of removing soil and leveling the area to accommodate baseball fields. Soil type, according to the Missoula County Soils Survey, is Grantsdale, a loam, and sandy-loam mixture. Soil quality should be enhanced with the addition of topsoil for planting grass. Soil stability will remain unchanged. Moisture content will not be impacted as a result of irrigation because this soil type characteristically drains well. This soil type is not heavy in salt and therefore will not cause saline seep.

Vegetation cover, quantity and quality/Noxious weeds

Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.

Determination: That portion of the equestrian park being developed was a small hill that was not managed or watered. The existing vegetation on the equestrian park appears to be unplanted grasses and weeds. The development of the baseball fields into grass will be a deterrent to the establishment of weeds. The only impacts expected are that weeds may be controlled better than previously by the management of the baseball fields. Missoula County, in the Tower Street Park Complex Plan, mandates that Missoula Westside Little League control noxious weeds in the development of this the little league fields.

Air quality

Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.

Determination: The development of grass baseball fields in an area previously bare land that was used as an equestrian park should decrease the potential for pollution from dust. No dirt

roads are planned for the baseball development. Parking area will be graveled. No air pollution is anticipated.

Historical and archeological sites

Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project.

Determination: The area being developed has been historically a gravel pit. A portion of the area was developed as an equestrian park. A portion was previously developed into baseball fields. SHPO search requested. SHPO identified a site near the project area. Site 24MO520, is a section of the Missoula Irrigation Canal. This identified site is outside the project area and will not be impacted.

Demands on environmental resources of land, water, and energy

Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water and energy not already addressed.

Determination: There may be a minimal increase in electricity used by the new well pump. The applicant maintains that the new pump and system will be more efficient than that well pump already in use. The tradeoff in efficiency may actually reduce energy use. No impacts.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Locally adopted environmental plans and goals

Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.

Determination: Missoula County contacted regarding any plans for the area. Brian Mariano and Barb Martins, of the Missoula County Special Projects department, both stated that no environmental review was prepared for the lease to Westside Little League. The county commissioners approved the lease for the sole purpose of promoting little league activities in Missoula County. A copy of the lease is on file. The Missoula County Commissioners adopted the Tower Street Park Complex Plan in January of 1998. This plan outlines the responsibilities of the county and the Westside Little League in the development of 30 acres into youth baseball fields. The proposal is consistent with this plan.

Access to and quality of recreational and wilderness activities

Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.

Determination: A portion of an established equestrian park will be changed to baseball fields for little league use in Missoula County. The portion of the equestrian park that is being developed was unused as it was on a slope and not developed with trails. Recreation will be increased by

this development. The equestrian park remains usable and there will be an increase in the opportunity for youth baseball. There may be an increase in traffic in and around the new baseball fields. Recreational users presently use this area and the potential increase in traffic due to the addition of three fields does not appear to have any long-term impacts. This project will cause no significant impacts to access of recreational or wilderness activities.

Human health

Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.

Determination: No negative impacts on human health as a result of this project to develop three new baseball fields are foreseen.

Other human environmental issues

For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.

Impacts on:

- (a) Cultural uniqueness and diversity ? None.
- (b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues ? None.
- (c) Existing land uses ? None.
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment ? None.
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing ? None.
- (f) Demands for government services ? None.
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity ? None.
- (h) Utilities ? None.
- (i) Transportation ? The potential for an increase in local traffic may result from the use of three new baseball fields. Any increase would be limited to the baseball season and be of short duration.
- (j) Safety ? None.
- (k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances ? None.

- 2. Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:** The area of the proposed action is part of a designated multi-purpose park complex, the Tower Street Park Complex. The park complex is being incrementally developed by Missoula County and various collaborating entities. A Stewardship Committee is authorized to ensure that the improvements and uses of the park complex

are consistent with the plan. Missoula Westside Little League has entered into a lease agreement with Missoula County for the express purpose of developing little league fields for use by local youth. This proposed action by the Westside Little League is consistent with the Tower Street Park Complex Management and Utilization Plan.

Secondary and cumulative impacts to the area have been addressed in its Tower Street Park Complex Management and Utilization Plan, adopted by Missoula County Commissioners on January 14, 1998. Potential impacts considered by Missoula County include traffic, utilities, land use, open space and wildlife habitat. Increased traffic in the area is a possible secondary impact that could result from the addition of three more fields. The Tower Street Park Complex Plan considered this secondary impact. Grass planted on an area of previously unimproved land should reduce any currently existing weed problem. Wildlife habitat is built into the park complex by design. Other recreational uses are integrated into the area with walking paths and designated wildlife viewing areas. Each party that collaborates with Missoula County in the operation of the park complex is responsible for maintenance and utilities. A review of existing water rights in the area indicates no cumulative impacts would occur as a result of the proposed project.

- 3. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:** No reasonable alternatives to the proposed action are identified in this EA. The NO Action alternative would disallow the applicant from expanding a Little League Baseball Complex from six fields to nine fields and thereby limit the availability of recreational activities for Missoula youth.

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: **An EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action because no significant impacts have been identified as a result of the proposed action.**

Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:

Name: Patrick J. Ryan

Title: Water Resource Specialist

Date: [Automatic date code removed]