

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Revised 10-00

Note: Instructions to DNRC staff for preparing this EA can be found at:
http://www.dnrc.state.mt.us/eis_ea.html

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. **Applicant/Contact name and address:** Charlie O. & Rose Mary Wright
Brian R. & Sheila M. Trickel
21 Rainbow Bend
St Regis, MT 59649
2. **Type of action:** Permit to Appropriate Water
3. **Water source name:** Clark Fork River
4. **Location affected by action:** S½ NE¼ NW¼, Sec. 14, Twp. 18N, Rge. 26W, Sanders Co.
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. The applicants are proposing to irrigate 2.5 acres from the Clark Fork River with a pump powered by a 9 horsepower gasoline combustible engine. The pump has a rated capacity of 55 gallons per minute and will be connected to a two-inch distribution line, which will have 18 faucets with standard garden hose connections. Six to eight sprinklers will be used at a time to cover the irrigated area. The 2.5 acres of irrigation will be on lots 20, 21 and 22 of Frontier River sites which is an approved subdivision by Sanders County.
6. **Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:** Montana Historical Society, Montana Heritage Program and Sanders County Clerk & Recorder.

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: The source is not identified as chronically or periodically dewatered. During water year 1998 through 1999 the minimum mean monthly flow was 2736 cfs during September.

The request for 55 gpm is .00004 percent of the flow, which is an imperceptible amount of water from this source.

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: This segment of the Clark Fork River is identified on the Montana 303(d) list as impaired and threatened. This segment shows only partial support for aquatic life and cold water fish. It does not support drinking and has not been assessed for swimming and recreation. It will fully support agriculture and industry, which is commensurate to this requested action. The additional use of 55 gpm is .00004 percent of the minimum river flow and will not change the water quality support ratings. The sprinkler system will apply this polluted water to the land where the water is cleaned by filtration through the soil. In many cases the pollutants act as a fertilizer to supplement that needed by the turf being grown.

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 use of surface water will have no impact on groundwater.

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 means of diversion will be a gasoline engine pump connected to a two-inch distribution line. It will have no impact on the channel and will not modify the river flow. It does not create any barriers or impact riparian areas. Well construction and dams are not applicable to the project.

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: Fifty-five gallons per minute from this segment of the Clark Fork River is an imperceptible amount of water regarding impact to the source. A research request form was sent to the Montana Natural Heritage Program and it was found that Bull Trout are considered endangered in all of Western Montana except the Yaak River drainage above Yaak Falls. This segment of the Clark Fork River having only partial support for cold water fish will not be impacted by an additional .00004 percent of the flow being appropriated. No other plant or animal species were identified as being within the project area.

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 fifty five gallon per minute appropriation from the Clark Fork River will have no impact to wetlands. The project does not involve nor is it near wetlands.

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

Determination: This project does not have a pond associated to it.

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 location is identified as class 3 irrigated land, which includes soils with clay texture in the surface or subaerial (or both) with restricted permeability and may include slight to moderately saline soils. Also in class 3 are soils of moderately shallow depth over gravel with low moisture holding capacity. Turf is a permanent grass cover found on home lawns, parks, golf courses, cemeteries, Federal and State highway rights-of-way, industrial plants, recreation areas, schools, hospitals and airports. By 1983 there were over 10,000,000 acres (4,046,000 hectares) of turf in the United States exclusive of home lawns indicating environmental acceptance of the requested action.

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: Natural ground cover consists of forest litter and decomposed conifer leaves and twigs that cover light brownish gray very fine sandy loam. The development of grass will be a deterrent to the establishment of weeds and provide a permanent turf cover.

Air quality

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

Determination: Most likely there will be no change to current air quality. The development of grass will hold dust and other possible air pollutants in place. A chance exists there may be a gas odor from the pump but this impact would be minor.

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 is a portion of an approved Sanders County Subdivision. The Montana Historical Society was contacted to conduct a cultural resources file search for this project. One site identified as 24SA137, is a historic Euro-American site known as "CCC Camp #41." 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: Water and land are undoubtedly the most impacted resource. No other environmental impacts have been identified.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Locally adopted environmental plans and goals

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

Determination: The development is within an approved Sanders County subdivision known as Frontier River sites. This proposed action is consistent with the county approved 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: There will be no impact to the quality of recreation or wilderness activities nor will access be denied to any established recreation areas except by Forest Service road closures that occur throughout public domain in Sanders County.

Human health

Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.

Determination: This project does not have an effect on human health.

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 ? NO
- (b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues ? NO
- (c) Existing land uses ? NO
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment ? NO
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing ? Minor impact to existing developments.
- (f) Demands for government services ? NO
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity ? NO
- (h) Utilities ? NO
- (i) Transportation ? NO
- (j) Safety ? NO
- (k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances ? NO

2. **Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:** A declaration of restrictive covenants prevents these residential lots from further subdivision for the purpose of constructing more than one dwelling on any lot as platted. These covenants shall run with the land and be binding upon all owners, their heirs and assigns. The magnitude and significance of secondary and cumulative impacts from the subdivision as platted is controlled by the county and other local governments through zoning, land use planning, and local ordinances. The potential for impact to Noxon Dam and associated power generation are not anticipated to be significant because of land use planning and local ordinances.

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. Without electrical power a well is not a reasonable alternative to irrigate 2.5 acres. The no action alternative would be to not develop turf, which has become an accepted practice across the United States.

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: No significant impacts have been identified, therefore no EIS is necessary.

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

Name: Rich Russell

Title: Water Resources Specialist

Date: November 17, 2000