

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. *Applicant/Contact name and address:* Mt. Dept of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
1420 E. 6th St.
Helena, Mt 59620-0701
2. *Type of action:* Application to Change a Water Right No. 76LJ 30008151
3. *Water source name:* Groundwater Well
4. *Location affected by action:* S2SWSW Section 2, Twp 27N, Rge 20W, Flathead County
5. *Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:*
The DNRC shall issue an Authorization to Change a Water Right if the applicant proves the criteria in § 85-2-402, MCA are met. This change application is to change the point of diversion on two 1938 water rights and to correct the point of diversion on a 1984 Permit to Appropriate Water. This change is also to consolidate all purposes into one – fisheries (fish raceway and fish rearing facility) for year round use. The new point of diversion is in the S2SWSW Sec 2, Twp 28N, Rge 20W, Flathead County. The Montana State Dept of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks’ (DFWP) Rose Creek Hatchery is located between Montana Highway 35 and Flathead River approximately four miles north of Bigfork.

The Hatchery Bureau (DFWP) will need to perform an Environmental Assessment once their design consultant team has developed a preliminary design package.

6. *Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:
(include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction)*

State Historic Preservation Office (Montana Historical Society)
Natural Heritage Program (NHP)
Montana Dept of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (DFWP)
Montana Dept of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

<h2>PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</h2>

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 of supply is a groundwater well.

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: The source of supply is a groundwater well.

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: The project should not impact ground water quality or supply. A decision has not yet been made on where to dispose the wastewater from the hatchery – subsurface disposal or discharge into Rose Creek. The potential discharge rate for phase I could approach 1.1 million gallons per day. Initially, subsurface disposal has been all but ruled out. “The drain field, sized with the loading rate, would require 2.7 million square feet of drain trench bottom.” The alternative is to discharge the raceway water by gravity directly into Rose Creek. Rose Creek could be impacted. Rose Creek facility discharge should be included in the general DFWP discharge permit application for their fish hatcheries.

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 is an artesian groundwater well. Operation of the appropriation works will not impact channels, flow rates, riparian areas, or dams.

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 web site indicates the entire area east and west of the Flathead River as a bird rookery and the rookery is on several watch lists. In addition, the Guadalupe Water-nymph, found in only five areas in Montana, is on the BLM watch list. The water-nymph is generally found around oxbow sloughs, of which there are many in this area of Flathead County.

The project is located on a tract of rural property. The land around the hatchery has been farm and ranch land for years. This project should not have any additional significant impact to the movement of the wildlife.

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: Wetlands in the immediate project area are relatively nonexistent.

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

Determination: This project does not involve any ponds.

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: Additional impacts to the area are not anticipated. This area of Montana is not known to develop saline seeps.

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: The establishment or spread of noxious weeds should not occur.

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

Determination: The project should not contribute to deterioration of air quality or increased air pollutants.

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 Montana State Historic Preservation Office concurred with DFWP that “No properties on or eligible for NRHP appear likely to exist within project impact area.”

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: Any other impacts are not evident.

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 project is consistent with locally adopted environmental plans and goals.

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: Access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities will not occur.

HUMAN HEALTH - *Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.*

Determination: The proposed project should have a positive impact on human health – stress reduction fishing on Montana’s streams and lakes stocked with fish from the Rose Creek Hatchery.

PRIVATE PROPERTY - *Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.*

*Yes*___ *No*_X_. *If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.*

Determination: The project site is owned by Montana State Dept of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks.

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? DFWP will manage the Rose Creek Fish Hatchery.
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? None
- (h) Utilities? None
- (i) Transportation? None
- (j) Safety? No
- (k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? None

2. ***Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:*** Human population is not impacted. Cumulative effects on wildlife are unknown.
3. ***Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*** Mitigation measures are not necessary.
4. ***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 action is the only alternative. A no action alternative would not allow the DFWP to develop and manage the new Rose Creek Fish Hatchery.

PART III. Conclusion

Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? No, a careful study of hatchery effluent disposal should mitigate any significant impact.

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 the completed project. DFWP will also write an Environmental Assessment. The impact of hatchery effluent into Rose Creek could have a significant impact on the waters of the Flathead Basin.

Name of person responsible for preparation of EA:

Name: Judy Jeniker

Title: Water Resources Specialist

Date: August 17, 2011