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**Montana Fish,  
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LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL  
POLICY OFFICE

Region 2 Headquarters  
3201 Spurgin Road  
Missoula, MT 59804-3101  
February 8, 2005

Governor's Office, Attn: Mike Volesky, PO Box 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801

Environmental Quality Council, PO Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620-1704

\*Dept. of Environmental Quality, PO Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901

\*Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, POB 201601, Helena, MT 59620-1601

\*Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:

Website, Commission Secretary, Division Secretaries, Regional Office Managers, Region 2  
Information Officer

\*State Historic Preservation Office, PO Box 201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202

\*MT State Library, PO BOX 201800, Helena, MT 59620-1800

Jim Jensen, MT Environmental Information Center, POB 1184, Helena, MT 59624-1184

Mayor Joe Petrusaitis, City of Hamilton, 223 S.2, Hamilton, MT 59840

\*Mailed electronically

Dear Interested Citizen:

The enclosed Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the proposed Hieronymus Pond Fish Removal Project. FWP would lower the water levels in the pond; physically remove suckers, pikeminnows and yellow perch and put most of them in the Bitterroot River or a nearby ditch; install a drain structure; and stock the pond with rainbow trout in order to provide a more desirable fishery.

This draft EA is available for review in Helena at FWP's Headquarters, the State Library and the Environmental Quality Council. It also may be obtained from Region 2 FWP Headquarters at the above address, or viewed on FWP's Internet website: <http://fwp.mt.gov> ("Recent Public Notices").

Comments will be accepted until 5:00 pm on March 14, 2005, and should be mailed to Chris Clancy, 1801 N. 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Hamilton, MT 59840 (phone 406-363-7169) or emailed to [cclancy@mt.gov](mailto:cclancy@mt.gov). If you have questions, please contact Chris Clancy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mack Long". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "M".

Mack Long  
Regional Supervisor

ML/sr

Enclosure: Hieronymus Pond Fish Removal Project EA

**MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS  
FISHERIES DIVISION**

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
HIERONYMUS POND FISH REMOVAL PROJECT**

**PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION**

- A. Type of Proposed Action:** Hieronymus Pond is located at the north edge of Hamilton, Montana on property owned by the City of Hamilton (Figures 1 and 2). The pond is approximately 3.2 acres in surface area and lies on the southern portion of Hieronymus Park. It is somewhat shallow for a fishpond (Figure 3). To improve access to the pond, a bridge was recently constructed across the Corvallis Canal through the efforts of the City of Hamilton, Bitterroot Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks and several local businesses. Hieronymus Pond supports several species of fish including largescale and longnose suckers, northern pikeminnow, redbottom shiners, and yellow perch, and the pond was stocked with rainbow trout in 2004. FWP proposes to lower the water level in the pond; physically remove suckers, pikeminnows and yellow perch and put most of them in the Bitterroot River or a nearby ditch; install a drain structure (that would allow future draining); and stock the pond with rainbow trout (once the pond refills) in order to provide a more desirable fishery.
- B. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action:** The Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) "...is hereby authorized to perform such acts as may be necessary to the establishment and conduct of fish restoration and management projects...." under statute 87-1-702.
- C. Estimated Commencement Date:** *March/April, 2005*  
*Estimated Completion Date: May 2005*  
*Current Status of Project Design: (% Complete): 30%*
- D. Name and Location of the Project:** Hieronymus Pond Fish Removal Project. Hieronymus Pond lies within Hieronymus Park, which is owned and managed by the city of Hamilton, Montana. The pond is near the south edge of the park (T6N, R21W, Sec. 24 SE 1/4).
- E. Project Size (acres affected):**
1. Developed/residential - 0 acres
  2. Industrial - 0 acres
  3. Open Space/Woodlands/Recreation - 0 acres
  4. Wetlands/Riparian – 3.2 acre pond
  5. Floodplain - 0 acres
  6. Irrigated Cropland - 0 acres
  7. Dry Cropland - 0 acres
  8. Forestry - 0 acres
  9. Rangeland - 0 acres
  10. Other



Figure 1. Location (\*) of Hieronymus Pond, Hamilton, Ravalli County, Montana.

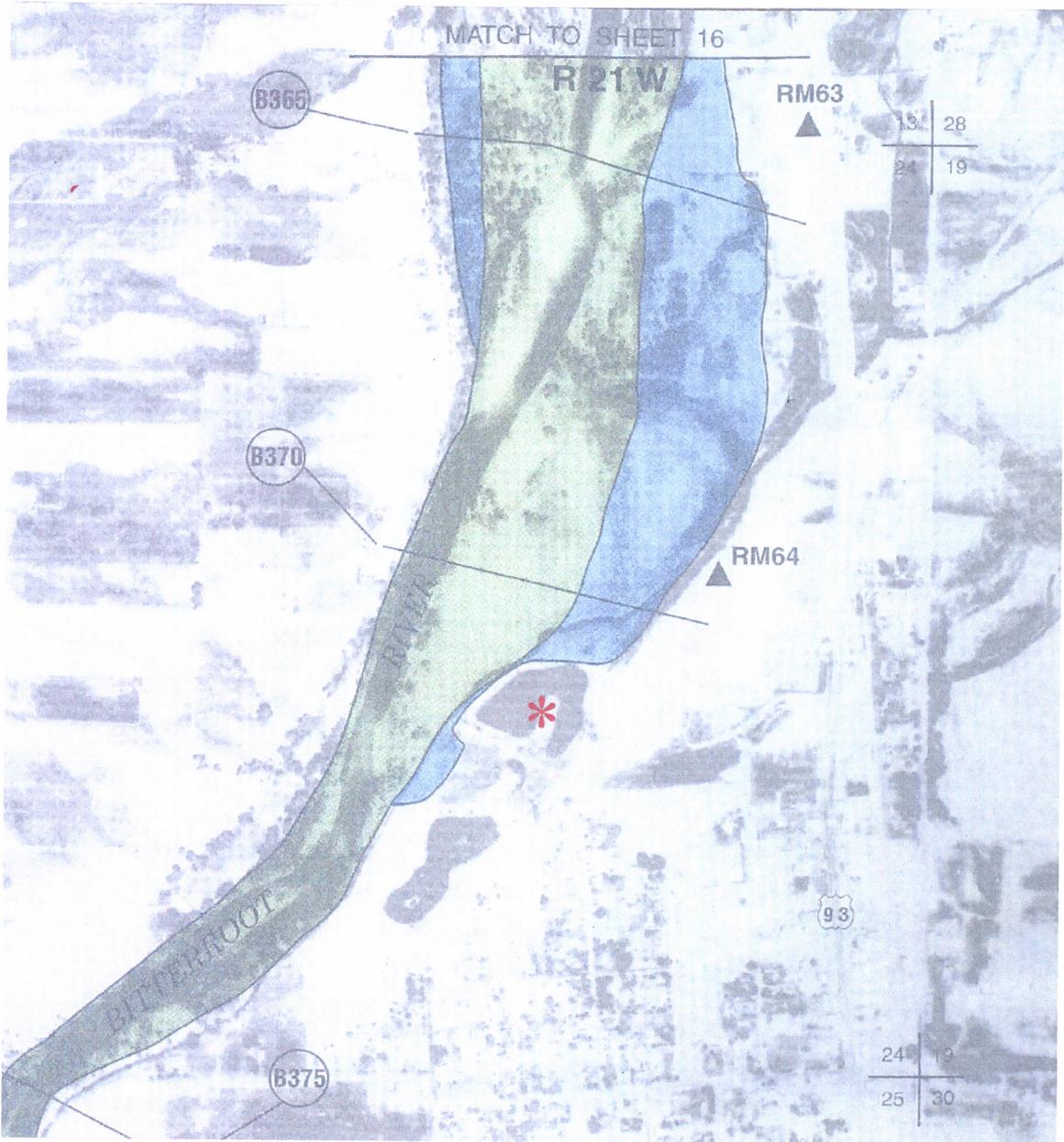


Figure 2. Map showing location (\*) of Hieronymus Pond.

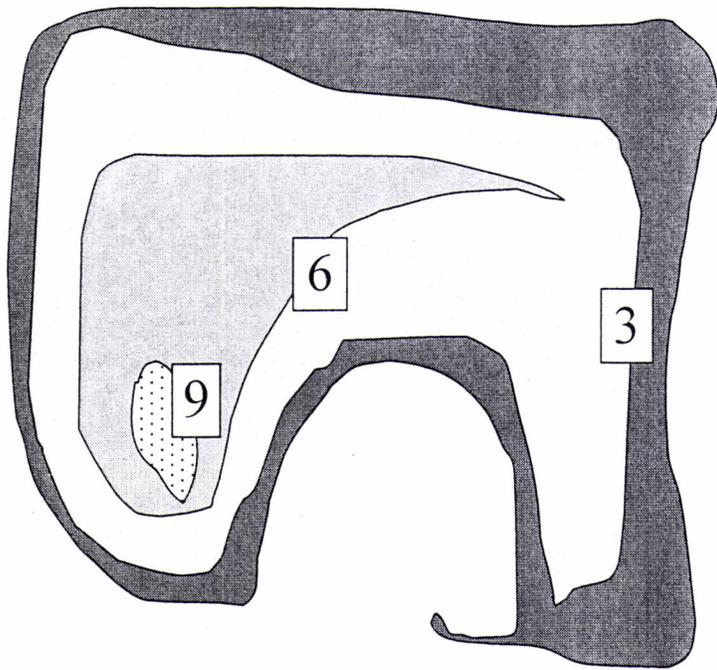


Figure 3. Depth profile of Hieronymus Pond, Hamilton, Ravalli County, Montana. The maximum depth is about 10 feet at low pool in the Spring.

## **F. Narrative Summary of the Proposed Action and Purpose of the Proposed Action**

### **1. Summary of the Proposed Action:**

The proposed action is to suppress or remove longnose and largescale suckers, northern pikeminnows and yellow perch from Hieronymus Pond. After the project is completed, the pond will be restocked with rainbow trout to provide a children's fishing pond. The pond supports large populations of suckers, minnows and yellow perch that reached the pond by unknown means. Removal of these fish is necessary to provide habitat for hatchery rainbow trout.

This project would entail temporarily lowering the pond level by several feet and installing an underwater outlet structure to allow similar water manipulations in the future. The underwater outlet structure will be purchased from Agri-Drain Corporation. While the pond is low, fish will be removed by physical means including electrofishing and netting. The fish will be relocated into the Corvallis Canal or the Bitterroot River. Yellow perch will not be reintroduced into public waters. We will contact the local food bank to find out if they are interested in having the yellow perch. When the fish removal project is finished, the water levels will be allowed to return to normal and rainbow trout will be stocked. This project will not remove all of the target species and therefore will likely result in regular physical removal projects every few years to maintain a quality fishery.

### **2. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action:**

Children's fishing opportunities in the Bitterroot Valley are limited. Many miles of streams are available, however, few lakes are easily accessible for children. Hieronymus Pond is located on property owned by the city of Hamilton and is easily accessible for children.

### **3. Benefits of the Project:**

If successful, the project should provide fishing opportunities in a safe setting within the city limits of Hamilton.

## **G. Other Local, State, or Federal agencies with overlapping jurisdiction**

Department of Environmental Quality – Helena  
City of Hamilton  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

## **H. Agencies Consulted During the Preparation of the EA**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks – Helena, Missoula  
Department of Environmental Quality – Helena  
City of Hamilton  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

## PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

### A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u>	IMPACT Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		NO	1b
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				

**Comment 1b.** A trench will be dug between the pond and Corvallis Canal to initially drain the pond. Once a structure is put in place, the trench will be refilled.

<b>2. WATER</b>	<b>IMPACT Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?			X		NO	2a
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?			X		NO	2b
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?			X		NO	2k
l. Will the project affect a designated floodplain?		X				
m. Will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 2a)			X		NO	see 2a

**Comment 2a:** No significant water quality changes are anticipated. During the draining of the pond, some turbidity will occur and some sediment will enter the Corvallis Canal. It is anticipated that the majority of the sediment will settle out in the ditch.

**Comment 2b:** While the pond is being drained a slight increase in the flow of the Corvallis Canal would occur.

**Comment 2k.** Some users of Hieronymus Park may decide to avoid Hieronymus Park during the project.

3. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (also see 13 (c))		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. Will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regs?		X				

<b>4. VEGETATION</b>	<b>IMPACT Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?			X		NO	4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?		X				
f. Will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?			X			4f

**Comment 4a.** Lowering the pond would be deleterious to submergent vegetation (algae and underwater plants). From the standpoint of fishing, this would be desirable. However any animals that depend of the submergent vegetation would be affected.

**Comment 4f.** Lowering the pond will expose the emergent vegetation (cattails, etc.) along the pond boundary to air. This may have some effect on this vegetation, but we do not expect any serious long-term consequences.

<b>5. FISH/WILDLIFE</b>	<b>IMPACT Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?			X		SOME	5b
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of non-game species?				X	NO	5c
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?			X			See 5b
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?			X		SOME	5g
h. Will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f)			X			5h
i. Will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d)		X				

**Comment 5b:** The project is designed to remove some species of fish to be replaced by more “desirable” rainbow trout. This proposed action is intended to result in a higher quality children’s fishery in Hieronymus Pond. The removal of the species present in the pond now, could result in changing use patterns by other species. Osprey have been observed fishing in the pond, and could be affected by this project if fish become less available to them. Some waterfowl use the pond. While the lowering of the pond may have an effect, the more likely effect is the increased use of the area by people. Signing and some limited fencing could help to keep people away from critical areas.

**Comment 5c:** The project is designed to remove largescale and longnose sucker, northern pikeminnow and yellow perch from Hieronymus Pond. Most of the fish will be transplanted into the Corvallis Canal or Bitterroot River. A fish transfer form for transplanting the fish from Hieronymus Pond has been submitted to FWP. This form is reviewed by a committee within FWP to approve or deny fish transfers. The committee will consider the propriety of releasing the fish into the Bitterroot River or Corvallis Canal. There should be little or no impact to the existing fish in either the Corvallis Canal or Bitterroot River as all three species are already present.

Hatchery rainbow trout stocked into Hieronymus Pond in 2004 are the only non-target fish species that are known to be present in Hieronymus Pond that will potentially be affected by the proposed draining. Also, some taxa of invertebrates and crustaceans are predicted to undergo a temporary decrease in population levels.

**Comment 5g.** Increased use of the pond by people will likely lead to some displacement of wildlife that use the pond. Some mitigation measures may help with this situation.

**Comment 5h.** Bald Eagles frequent the Bitterroot River in this area and may capture fish from Hieronymus Pond occasionally. We have seen osprey using the pond frequently. Rainbow trout will be stocked in the pond and human use of the area could increase. This project may change any use of the pond by bald eagles and Osprey.

**B.HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

<b>6. NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</b>	<b>IMPACT Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to severe or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				

<b>7. LAND USE</b>	<b>IMPACT Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?			X		SOME	7b
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				

**Comment 7b.** Increased use of the area is anticipated if a better fishery develops. This would result in more trampling of the shorebanks and potential disturbance to waterfowl and other wildlife use of the pond. Some mitigation could be done to control use in critical areas.

<b>8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u></b>	<b>IMPACT Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?			X		YES	8c
d. Will any chemical toxicants be used?		X				

**Comment 8c:** Electrofishing does carry some risk, but experience crews will be used so chances of an accident are minimal. .

We have been in contact with and will coordinate with the managers of the Corvallis Canal which receives overflow water from Hieronymus Pond.. The project should take place when the Corvallis Canal is carrying little water. Typically, they begin diverting water in April after they have cleaned the ditch. We have also contacted and will coordinate with the managers of the C&C ditch which diverts overflow water into Hieronymus Park. The project should be take place when no ditch water is entering the pond. Typically, they begin diverting water in April or May and finish in early October.

<b>9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u></b>	<b>IMPACT Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				

<b>10. PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</b>	<b>IMPACT Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Will the proposed action 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? If any, specify: _____			X			10a.
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased used of any energy source?		X				
e. Define projected revenue sources			X			10e
f. Define projected maintenance costs			X			10f

**Comment 10a.** Increased use of the area will likely contribute to more litter and human impacts. Since the pond is only accessible to walk in use by the public, motorized traffic in not an issue. The ditch will be dug by the city of Hamilton crews.

**Comment 10e:** This proposed project would be funded through Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. We do not have cost estimates for the diversion structure. The draining of the pond and removal of the fish would take several days and would cost in the range of \$2000.00. The city of Hamilton would pay for excavation.

**Comment 10f:** Maintenance would include monitoring of the fishery. Site visits would occur following treatment. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks would fund this work.

<b>11. AESTHETICS/RECREATION</b>	<b>IMPACT Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?			X		NO	11a
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?			X			See 7b
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report)		X				
d. Will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c)		X				

**Comment 11a.** When the pond is drained, it will detract from the aesthetic beauty of the area. Once the pond refills, the pond area should look much as it did prior to the project.

<b>12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</b>	<b>IMPACT Unknown</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Minor</b>	<b>Potentially Significant</b>	<b>Can Impact Be Mitigated</b>	<b>Comment Index</b>
<b>Will the proposed action result in:</b>						
a. Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic or paleontological importance?	X					12a.
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?	X					12b.
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. Will the project affect historic or cultural resources?	X					12d.

**Comments 12a, 12b & 12d.** The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has been contacted regarding this project, which will not be started until we get clearance. SHPO requested that FWP perform a cultural resources survey, which we have begun.

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE	IMPACT Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
<b>Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:</b>						
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources, which create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?			X			13e
f. Is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e)			X			See 13e
g. List any federal or state permits required.						13g

**Comment 13e:** We do not expect this project to generate substantial controversy. Any change in the human use of an urban park could cause some dissatisfaction. We have made presentations to both the Hamilton Park Board and Hamilton City Council, with little controversy at this point.

**Comment 13g:** The following list of permits will be required:

- DEQ 308 - Department of Environmental Quality (Turbidity Exemption)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Section 404 Permit

### **PART III. ALTERNATIVES**

Two alternatives were considered during preparation of the Environmental Assessment.

#### **Alternative 1 - No Action.**

The "No Action" alternative would leave Hieronymus Pond "as is". The pond has a relatively large population of suckers, northern pikeminnow and yellow perch, which will continue to compete with stocked rainbow trout for food and space.

#### **Alternative 2- Proposed Action**

Removal of fish would be by mechanical means only, including electrofishing and netting. The efficiency of electrofishing and netting can be improved by lowering the pond, however, removal of all of the fish would be unlikely. Part of the problem is that fish will sense and avoid the electricity or netting activity to avoid capture. This problem gets progressively worse as the width and depth of the pond increases.

#### **PART IV. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CONCLUSION SECTION**

*A) Is an EIS required?* No

This environmental review demonstrates that the impacts of this proposed project are not significant. The proposed action would benefit anglers with minimal impact on the physical, biological, or the human environment. Fishing opportunities for Montana anglers would be slightly reduced over the short term until a fishery was re-established.

*B) Public Involvement.*

This EA will be posted on the State Bulletin Board and mailed directly to potentially interested persons. Public notification of the proposed action will be completed via Region 2's standard press release package to Montana newspapers and other media outlets. We also published a Legal Notice in the *Ravalli Republic*, *Missoulian*, and *Independent Record* newspapers. Notices about the availability of the EA were mailed to individuals who have expressed an interest in the area or in fish management of the Region 2 waters. Any interested citizen will be encouraged to contact Chris Clancy, FWP, to discuss the proposal.

*C) Duration of the comment period?*

The comment period is 30 days. Public comment will be accepted through 5:00 PM on March 9, 2005. Please mail or email comments to Chris Clancy [see D) below].

*D) Name, title, address, and telephone number of the Person Responsible for Preparing the EA Document.*

Chris Clancy  
Fisheries Biologist  
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks  
1801 N. 1<sup>st</sup> Street,  
Hamilton, MT 59840  
(406) 363-7169  
[cclancy@mt.gov](mailto:cclancy@mt.gov)

