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: City of Belgrade
91 East Central Ave.
Belgrade, MT. 59714

2. Type of action: Application to Change a Water Right # 30041827-41H

3. Water source name: Wells

4. Location affected by project: Section 31, and W2 SW Sec 32 T1N R5E, Gallatin County.

5. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:
The City of Belgrade is expanding their place of use to include, Ryen Glenn Estates, and Meadowlark Ranch subdivisions. The water right being changed was granted when the Missouri River Basin established reservations above Fort Peck Dam. A total of 1400 GPM, up to 565 acre-feet of water is diverted from two previously authorized wells located in the SENWSW Sec 12 T1S R4E & SESENE Sec 7 T1S R5E, Gallatin County. Water is also used within the Belgrade service area. The DRNC shall issue an Authorization to Change if the applicant proves the criteria in MCA # 85-2-402 are met.

6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:
(include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction) Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Montana Natural Heritage Program, Gallatin County Planning Office, Montana State Historical Preservation Office.

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 of water is groundwater, which is hot listed as chronically or periodically dewatered by the DFWP. The water right being changed is a reserved right.

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 groundwater source is not listed on the DEQ, 303(d) list.

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: Adding a new place of use to an existing reservation will not impact groundwater quality or supply. Surface water flows will not be impacted by adding these new places of use.

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: Water will be supplied by two existing wells that have already been authorized. The wells were constructed to the specifications required for municipal water supplies.

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 was contacted. The bald eagle is known to occur near the area of the proposed subdivisions. These subdivisions should not have significant impact on the bald eagle.

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 involve creating new wetlands. Meadowlark Ranch was delineated and wetlands do exist in the area. If a jurisdictional wetland is impacted the developer is required to get a # 404 permit from the U S Army Corp of Engineers, and mitigate the impacts.

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

Determination: This project does not involve a pond. None game species may be displaces by these subdivisions. Fisheries will not be impacted.There will be no impact to existing resources.

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: There is no saline seep in the new proposed place of use. Moisture content may increase as lawns are irrigated. Soil quality may be enhanced if homeowners fertilize their lawns. Soil stability should be unchanged.

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: Existing vegetative cover will be altered by these new subdivisions. Houses, garages, driveways, lawns and gardens will replace the existing vegetation.

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

Determination: Air quality may be altered if any of the additional homeowners have woodstoves, or fireplaces. Additional vehicles will create additional auto emissions.

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 State Historic Preservation Office was contacted. They have not responded to my request. The subdivisions that will be supplied, Ryen Glen Estates, and Meadowlark Ranch have been approved, and will be developed regardless if there are unique archeological or historical sites.

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: No additional impacts on other environmental resources were 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 Gallatin County Planning Board has approved both of these subdivisions.

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: These subdivisions are located on private land, with no access to recreational or wilderness activities. No impact is expected.

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

Determination: No impact on human health is expected.

PRIVATE PROPERTY - *Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.*
Yes___ No___ If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.

Determination: Private property rights are not impacted by this proposed action.

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 significant impact

(*b)* *Local and state tax base and tax revenues?* It is unknown what additional taxes will be collected.

(c) *Existing land uses?* The existing land use will change. Open space will be transformed into new homes.

(*d)* *Quantity and distribution of employment?* New construction may bring new workers to this area.

(e) *Distribution and density of population and housing?* The population in this area will increase.

(f) *Demands for government services?* The demand for government services will increase.

(g) *Industrial and commercial activity?* There is no industrial or commercial activity planned for this subdivision.

(h) *Utilities?* The additional homes will require additional utilities.

(i) *Transportation?* Additional homes will bring additional vehicles to the roads in the area.

(j) *Safety?* With more vehicles on the road, driving may become less safe.

(k) *Other appropriate social and economic circumstances?* As the demand for additional homes increases, the affordability and availability of construction works is impacting local residents. Locals are now unable to find, or afford workers for many home improvement projects. As more people move to the Belgrade school district, the need for more schools increases. Local taxes are increasing to pay for these new schools. More people relocating to this area may bring with it more social problems.

2. ***Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:***

Secondary Impacts No secondary impacts have been identified.

Cumulative Impacts No cumulative impacts have been identified.

3. ***Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*** Mitigation or stipulation measures are not planned at this time.

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:*** Ryen Glenn Estates, and Meadowlark Ranch could drill their own supply wells.

PART III. Conclusion

1. ***Preferred Alternative*** The preferred alternative is to have the City of Belgrade supply these new subdivisions.

2 ***Comments and Responses*** No comments or responses were received at this time.

3. ***Finding:***
*Yes___ No_**X**__ 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: Significant impacts have not been identified. An EIS is not required for this action.

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

Name: Jan R. Mack
Title: Water Resource Specialist
Date: April 29, 2008