

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:* Indian Springs Ranch LLC
PO Box 226
Eureka, MT 59917-0226
2. *Type of action:* Water Use Permit Application 76D-30047716
3. *Water source name:* Groundwater
4. *Location affected by project:* Sections 25 and 36, T37N, R27W, Lincoln Co.
5. *Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:*

This application for beneficial water use permit is a request to use two manifold ground water wells to supply the community water for the Indian Springs Ranch subdivision in Lincoln County.

This water use request is for Phase I and II of the Indian Springs Ranch subdivision. The proposed diversion consists of two ground water wells. The primary well (Well #11) is approximately 140 feet deep, perforated from 125 to 140 feet, with a static water level (SWL) of 49 feet below measuring point. The second well (Production) is approximately 158 feet deep, perforated from 140 to 155 feet, with a static water level (SWL) of 48 feet below measuring point. Both wells are located in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ Section 36, T37N, R27W, Lincoln County. The proposed period of diversion and period of use is January 1 through December 31, inclusive each year. The proposed diversion rate is a maximum combined flow rate of 43 GPM, up to an annual volume of 39.5 AF (AF), for Multiple Domestic (127 connections, 35.3 AF) and Commercial (9 connections, 4.2 AF) uses. The place of use is generally located approximately 2.5 miles north of Eureka, Montana and directly east of US Highway 93. The proposed appropriation is for potable domestic and commercial water. All lawn and garden irrigation will be provided by a separate surface water source and distribution system.

The Indian Springs Ranch subdivision is a golf course community, including 18-hole golf course, clubhouse, restaurant, other commercial properties and single and multi-family residential development.

The DNRC shall issue a water use permit if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-311, MCA are met.

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

NRIS website for water and noxious weed information
Montana Natural Heritage Program for threatened and endangered plant and animal information
State of Montana Historical Preservation Office for cultural information

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: None. 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: None. 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: No Significant Impacts

The groundwater diversion proposed is hydraulically connected to surface water sources (Tetrault Lake and Lake Kookanusa) in the vicinity of the proposed project. The proposed groundwater appropriation will impact these sources to a minimal, non-significant extent.

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: No Significant Impacts.

The proposed diversion consists of two ground water wells. The primary well (Well #11) is approximately 140 feet deep, perforated from 125 to 140 feet, with a static water level (SWL) of 49 feet below measuring point. The second well (Production) is approximately 158 feet deep, perforated from 140 to 155 feet, with a static water level (SWL) of 48 feet below measuring

point. The proposed diversions are constructed by a licensed well driller in compliance with applicable rules.

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: No Significant Impacts.

The Montana Natural Heritage Program file search conducted for this project proposal indicated several plant and animal species of concern occur in the vicinity of the proposed project.

The animal species identified are: Sharp-tailed Grouse, Grasshopper Sparrow, Gray Wolf, and Spalding’s Catchfly.

Also identified by Montana Natural Heritage Program file search as occurring in the vicinity of the proposed project is Dancing Prairie. This is an area of significant ecological importance due to the presence of an unusual combination of native grasses found in native prairie environs.

The proposed project is not expected to significantly impact any of the animal or plant species listed above.

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: There are no wetlands associated with the current proposal.

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

Determination: There are no ponds associated with the current proposal.

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: No Significant Impacts.

The proposed project is not expected to degrade the soils in the affected area

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: No Significant Impacts.

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

Determination: No Significant Impacts.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES - *Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project.*

Determination: No Significant Impacts.

The State Historical Preservation Office recommends that due to the ground disturbance already completed, that no cultural inventory is warranted.

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: None expected.

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 current proposal is an approved subdivision consistent with local plans.

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: The current proposal will not impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.

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

Determination: The current proposal will not impact human health.

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:

OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.

Impacts on:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| (a) <u>Cultural uniqueness and diversity?</u> | None |
| (b) <u>Local and state tax base and tax revenues?</u> | Increased revenues expected |
| (c) <u>Existing land uses?</u> | None |
| (d) <u>Quantity and distribution of employment?</u> | Temporary increase expected |
| (e) <u>Distribution and density of population and housing?</u> | Minor increase expected |
| (f) <u>Demands for government services?</u> | Minor increase expected |
| (g) <u>Industrial and commercial activity?</u> | None |
| (h) <u>Utilities?</u> | Minor |
| (i) <u>Transportation?</u> | Minor |
| (j) <u>Safety?</u> | None |
| (k) <u>Other appropriate social and economic circumstances?</u> | None |

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

Secondary Impacts NONE IDENTIFIED IN THIS EA

Cumulative Impacts NONE IDENTIFIED IN THIS EA

3. *Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:* there are no mitigation/stipulation measures identified for the proposed action.

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:* The no action alternative is the only alternative to the proposed action. Under the no action alternative, the applicant would be unable to obtain a water use permit for the community water needs of the proposed Indian Springs Ranch subdivision.

PART III. Conclusion

1. Preferred Alternative

2. Comments and Responses

3. Finding:

Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?

Yes___ No_X__

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: May 12, 2010