

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: **David E Schuett  
1025 Selway Dr  
Dillon MT 59725-8449**
2. Type of action: **Application to Change a Water Right No. 30046235-41B  
(Statement of Claim No. 88226-41B)**
3. Water source name: **Groundwater Well**
4. Location affected by action: **SWSESE, Sec 20, Twp 8S, Rge 8W, Beaverhead Co.**
5. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and objectives:  
**The Applicant proposes to add points of diversion and change a portion of the places of use of historic water right no. 88226-41B, aka the Forrester well. The Applicant proposes to transfer a portion of the annual flow rate and volume of the historic Forrester well to three new wells to eliminate ditch loss and improve the efficiency of the irrigation diversions.**

**The three new wells are located in the SESESW of Sec 20, SESESE of Sec 18, Twp 8S, Rge 8W and the SESESE of Sec 12, Twp 8S, Rge 9W all in Beaverhead County**

**The Applicant is removing 402 acres that were historically irrigated on the east side of Blacktail Deer Creek. Irrigation will be done by sprinkler with just a small amount of flood irrigation remaining. The proposed place of use will be located in Secs 17, 18, 19, & 20, Twp 8S, Rge 8W and Sec 13, Twp 8S, Rge 9W, all in Beaverhead County.**

**The Applicant is requesting 2250 GPM up to 623.29 AF/ per year for this change.**

**The DNRC shall issue an Authorization to Change if the criteria in 85-2-402, MCA are met.**

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

**Montana Department of Natural Resources (DNRC) – Jim Beck, HRO Engineer  
Montana Department of Natural Resources (DNRC) - James Heffner,  
Hydrogeologist**

## Part II. Environmental Review

### 1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

<b>PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</b>
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#### 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: **No significant adverse impact.**

**The proposed project would not affect chronically dewatered streams as identified by DFWP; it does not seek to develop water from a surface water 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: **No significant adverse impact.**

**This project would not affect water quality in perennial streams.**

**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 adverse impact.**

**This project would not impact groundwater quality or supply. This is a change on a historic groundwater claim. There will not be additional water diverted and should not impact adjacent surface water flows.**

**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 adverse impact.**

**The project will not affect streams or riparian areas. A licensed well driller drilled the wells in substantial accordance with the Montana Board of Water Well Contractors and Administrative Rules of Montana. Gribble Well #1 drilled to a depth of 370 feet and was grouted with bentonite to a depth of 20 feet. The well has an 8.63" steel casing with perforations from 60 to 160 feet. The pump is a Berkley 7t-500 powered by a 50 hp motor. Gribble Well #3 drilled to a depth of 342 feet and was grouted with bentonite to a depth of 20 feet. The well has a 8.63" steel casing from +2 to 233 feet and a 6.63" steel casing from 222 to 342 feet with perforations from 100 to 168 feet and 208 to 342 feet. The pump is a Berkley 7t-500 powered by a 50 hp motor. The Pond Well drilled to a depth of 330 feet and was grouted with bentonite to a depth of 20 feet. The well has a 8.63" steel casing from +2 to 241 feet and a 6.63" steel casing from 230 to 330 feet with perforations from 80 to 330 feet. The pump is a Berkley 7t-500 powered by a 50 hp motor.**

#### 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 adverse impact.**

**This is historic farmed and irrigated ground. There will not be an impact to any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or species of special concern.**

**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 proposed project does not involve wetlands.**

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

Determination: **This proposed project does not involve a pond.**

**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 adverse impact.**

**The proposed project will apply a majority of the water through center pivot and hand line sprinklers. Center pivot sprinklers can be operated and managed to function efficiently with minimal runoff or deep percolation. The ability of the soil to support plant growth and assist in weed control is enhanced by the proposed irrigation water supply.**

**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 adverse impact.**

**During the well drilling and installation of the pivots the ground would have been disturbed. This would have been of short duration until the crops were planted. The landowner is responsible for the establishment or spread of noxious weeds on his property.**

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

Determination: **There will not be any affect on air quality from the proposed project.**

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

Determination: **This is historic farmed and irrigated ground. If there were any archeological or historic sites near the area the disturbance from irrigation and farming over the years would have already destroyed the historic 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 other demands have been identified**

<b>HUMAN ENVIRONMENT</b>
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**LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS** - Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.

Determination: **No plans or goals have been identified.**

**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: **No impacts to the access or quality of recreational and wilderness activities have been identified.**

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

Determination: **No impacts to human health have been identified.**

**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.

**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 adverse impact.**
- (b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? **No significant adverse impact.**
- (c) Existing land uses? **The existing land use is irrigation and that is not changing.**
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? **No significant adverse impact.**
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? **No significant adverse impact.**
- (f) Demands for government services? **No significant adverse impact.**

- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? **No significant adverse impact.**
- (h) Utilities? **No significant adverse impact.**
- (i) Transportation? **No significant adverse impact.**
- (j) Safety? **No significant adverse impact.**
- (k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? **No significant adverse impact.**

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

Secondary Impacts: **No secondary impacts have been identified at this time.**

Cumulative Impacts: **No cumulative impacts have been identified at this time.**

3. Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures: **No mitigation or stipulation measures have been identified at this time.**

**This application will go through the DNRC public notice procedure, and water users concerned with potential impacts will be given the opportunity to object to the application. The decision by the DNRC to grant or deny the application would not be made until these review processes are completed.**

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 would prevent the applicant from using the new wells to eliminate ditch loss and improve the efficiency of the irrigation diversions.**

### **PART III. Conclusion**

1. Preferred Alternative: **Issue the authorization as applied for by the applicant, or in some modified form considered reasonable.**

2. Comments and Responses: **There have not been any comments or responses 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: **An EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action as no significant impacts were identified.**

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

Name: Kathy Arndt

Title: Water Resources Specialist

Date: April 1, 2011