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Department of Health and Environmental Sciences

STATE OF MONTANA HELENA, MONTANA 59601

John S. Anderson M.D.
DIRECTOR

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OCT 27 1975
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL

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October 24, 1975

Re: Skalkaho Lakes
Ravalli County

Honorable Thomas Judge, Governor, State of Montana, Helena
Citizens Advocate, Helena
Environmental Quality Council, Helena
Montana Fish and Game Department, Helena
Department of Highways, Helena
Department of Intergovernmental Relations, Division of Planning, Helena
Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Helena
Department of State Lands, Helena
Montana State Library, Helena
Board of County Commissioners, Courthouse, Hamilton
City-County Planning Board, Hamilton
City-County Health Department, Hamilton
Environmental Information Center, Box 12, Helena
C. W. Gonder, 823 East Call Street, Livingston
Mrs. Vel Jansen, 430 South Sixth, Livingston
Mrs. Winifred Lucky, 420 South Sixth, Livingston
Mary Lee Reese, League of Women Voters, 29 South Alta, Helena
Doris Milner, Montana Wilderness Assn., Route 1, Box 1410, Hamilton
Northern Rockies Action Group, #9 Placer Street, Helena
Paul T. Richards, 902 North Park, Helena
John Schillinger, Microbiology Department, Montana State University, Bozeman
Concerned Citizens for a Quality Environment, c/o Ron Erickson, Chairman, University of Montana, Missoula
Student Environmental Research Center, University of Montana, Room 212, Venture Center, Missoula
John P. Duke, Assistant Vice President, Land Management, Burlington Northern, 650 Central Building, Seattle, Washington, 98104
Herb Anderson, P. O. Box 42, Raynesford, MT 59469
Hugh Schaefer, 206 Ben Hogan Dr., Missoula
A. E. Dionne, P. O. Box 1142, Hamilton

Enclosed is an agency impact determination that has been prepared for Skalkaho Lakes, a proposed subdivision in Ravalli County.

Subdivision plans and specifications have been submitted to the Department of Health and Environmental Sciences for approval of water supply, sewage disposal, and solid waste disposal systems.

This determination defines the project and specifies those conditions under which the subdivision will receive approval without the development of an environmental impact statement. This determination is intended to assure all interested governmental agencies and public groups that this approval is being sought within the intent of both the Montana Environmental Policy Act and the Montana subdivision laws.

Sincerely,

Edward W. Casne, Chief
Subdivision Bureau
Environmental Sciences Division

EWC:TE:ti
Enclosure
cc: Ben Wake
Terry Carmody

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ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COUNCIL

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

October 24, 1975

An Agency Impact Determination for
Skalkaho Lakes Subdivision
A Proposed Subdivision in Ravalli County, Montana

Pursuant to the Montana Environmental Policy Act, Section 69-6504(6)(3); the act controlling both public and private water supply and sewage disposal for subdivisions, Section 69-5001 through 69-5005; and the act to control water pollution, Section 69-4801 through 69-4827, R.C.M. 1947, the following agency impact statement was prepared by the Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, Environmental Sciences Division, concerning the proposed Skalkaho Lakes subdivision, for which a submittal has been received requesting subdivision plat approval.

Location

The proposed subdivision is situated in Ravalli County approximately 4 1/2 miles southeast of Hamilton, Montana, south of the Skalkaho Road (State Highway 38). The tract of land is "T" shaped and is in the Northwest 1/4 of Section 17, Township 5 West, Range 20 West, Principal Montana Meridian. (See the attached map.)

Description of the proposed project

In April 1974 the owner of the land, A. E. Dionne, P. O. Box 1142, Hamilton, Montana, submitted a proposal to build Skalkaho Village Mobile Home Park, a 26-acre, 42-unit trailer court. A little over a year later, June 20, 1975, Dionne submitted a second proposal which he considered to be a better land use plan. The second proposal, Skalkaho Lakes, is a low density, single family residence development.

Dionne intends to subdivide 42.59 acres into 16 lots, ranging from a minimum of 1.79 acres to 5.55 acres. The total subdivided area will be 37.79 acres, with 4.80 acres dedicated for park space and 4.38 acres set aside for roads.

Two man-made lakes on the property are fed by a small stream called Cow Creek. The smaller lake, 1/4 of an acre, is in the north-central portion of the property and the larger lake, 2-3 acres, is in the south-central portion. A portion of the small lake is included in the park.

Each property owner will obtain water from individually drilled wells. According to the well logs of existing wells in the area, there should be no problem obtaining potable water.

Septic tanks with subsurface drainfields and an evapotranspiration system have been proposed to dispose of sewage. Soil profile descriptions, soil percolation rates and groundwater levels indicate septic tanks can be used on all the lots except Lot 16. The developer has agreed to install an Armon disposal system on that lot. The system eliminates much of the liquid waste through evapotranspiration.

All septic tanks will have a minimum capacity of 1,000 gallons, be constructed of concrete and shall meet minimum requirements of the State Department of Health and Environmental Sciences and the Ravalli County Health Department. The drainfield and septic tank locations, length of the drainfield and tile distribution lines shall also be in accordance with county and state regulations.

Solid waste will be picked up, for a fee, by the Bitterroot Disposal Company and hauled to the Bitterroot Valley Sanitary Landfill. This plan has been approved by the landfill operator and the refuse hauler.

The proposed road system for the subdivision has roads entering the development from the north, from the Skalkaho Highway, and the west from a private road. The road connecting the subdivision with the highway is the main thoroughfare and services Lots 5-16. Lots 1-4 in the western third of the development are serviced by the west entrance road. The lakes and creek separate the two road systems.

All roads will have 60 foot easements and gravel surfaces, and will use barrow pits and culverts to channel away surface water. A surface water problem existed along the east side of the road, between Lots 11-16, but has been solved. In accordance with the county sanitarian's recommendation, an interceptor ditch will be constructed to carry water the length of the road segment, through a culvert and into the larger of the two lakes.

Property owners will maintain the roads by means of a cooperative agreement.

Officials from power and telephone companies have reviewed the proposal, according to Dionne, and can provide utility and telephone services to the development. Power and phone lines will be buried.

Restrictive covenants have been proposed for the subdivision. The covenants include restrictions on land use and building, further subdivision of lots, animals, fences, nuisances, garbage, signs, sanitary restrictions and enforcement.

Existing Environmental Conditions

The development is on the northern slope of a hill which overlooks the Skalkaho Creek Valley. The bottom land traditionally has been farmed and the hillsides used for pastures and orchards.

Skalkaho Lakes will be situated on either side of Cow Creek and has been described as marginal pasture land, with a few trees.

The property adjacent to the subdivision is a mixture of residential and pasture land. Residential developments border the west and portions of the northern and southern boundries, with the remaining area adjacent to pasture land.

John Crawford, geological engineer for Professional Consultants, Inc., Missoula, conducted the soil profile and percolation tests for the proposed development.

According to Crawford, 10 soil profile trenches were dug with a backhoe to a depth of 10 feet. Trenches A, B, and C, along the eastern segment of the "T" revealed a moderate layer of gravelly topsoil, silty material with some clay to a depth of approximately 3 feet, with the remainder a mixture of sand, gravel, and silt. Trenches D, E and F, along the trunk of the "T" showed a moderate layer of topsoil, sandy silt to clayey silt, to a depth of about 2.5 feet and sandy silt (gravelly) to very hard clayey silt at the extreme southern end. Trenches G, H, I, and J, in the western segment of the property, revealed a moderate layer of silty loam with a mixture of gravel, cobbles, sand silt and minor clay particles about 6.5 feet thick under the topsoil.

Crawford said no groundwater seeped into the trenches during the testing which was conducted June 9, 1975.

Percolation tests showed that the rate of absorption was adequate for septic tank drainfields on all the lots, except Lot 16. However, the problem was resolved by the use of an evapotranspiration system.

Another possible pollution problem was resolved when the developer agreed to place the septic tank drainfields on Lots 1-4 on top of the hill, away from the steep slope.

Although a test well has not been drilled to determine the rate of flow and water quality, logs from surrounding wells indicate that potable water can be reached at a depth of about 80-120 feet.

The Ravalli County Planning staff reported that the size and location designated as park space is suitable, but the northern portion of the park's lake belongs to an adjacent property owner. The staff thought some arrangement should be made to either acquire the use of the remainder of the pond or fence it off to avoid trespassing problems.

Song birds and ground squirrels are the predominate wildlife on the property. According to a spokesman from the State Fish and Game Department's Missoula district office, the property is not a wintering area for big game animals, nor does it have any endangered species.

The land is not within the 100 year flood plain and is not subject to avalanches, rockfalls or slides.

Environmental Impacts

From the aesthetic standpoint, the creation of another subdivision in the area will accelerate the transition of the traditional pastoral setting to a surburban setting. However, the existance of the Bonanza Land No. 2 subdivision, residential homes and a county park, adjacent to the northwest boundry of the proposed development, established the fact that the land use of the area has been changing for the last several years.

Sewage from homes in the subdivision should not pollute surface or groundwater if the development proceeds according to previously mentioned plans and specifications.

One aspect of water quality and soil erosion which concerned the County Planning Department staff was the grazing of privately owned livestock within the subdivision.

After reviewing the plans, the county staff recommended that the covenants allow only one animal unit per lot. An animal unit is a mature horse or cow, or a cow and a calf (up to six months) or a mare and foal (up to a year old).

Large animals would present a serious problem on Lots 11-16 and Lot 4. All the lots are situated on the slopes of Cow Creek, and over grazing would accelerate soil erosion of the sandy-clay soil. Additionally, animal wastes would effect the quality of the water in the pond.

Extensive plant life in the pond indicates a high biochemical oxygen demand (B.O.D.) and nutrient level according to the staff. Added B.O.D. could result in eutrification of the lakes and loss of fish habitat.

The developer has agreed to incorporate the planning staff's suggestion in the covenants.

According to the sheriff's office, county school superintendent's office and the rural fire department, the impact of the development will not seriously effect community services. All three organizations said they could handle the increased demand.

Adverse Impacts

It is impossible to mitigate the aesthetic impact of a subdivision on undeveloped land, but the developer's restrictive covenants will help control the type and course of development.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Committment of Resources

This land would be permanently committed to residential use.

Alternatives Available to this Department

A. Approve the subdivision plat as originally submitted.

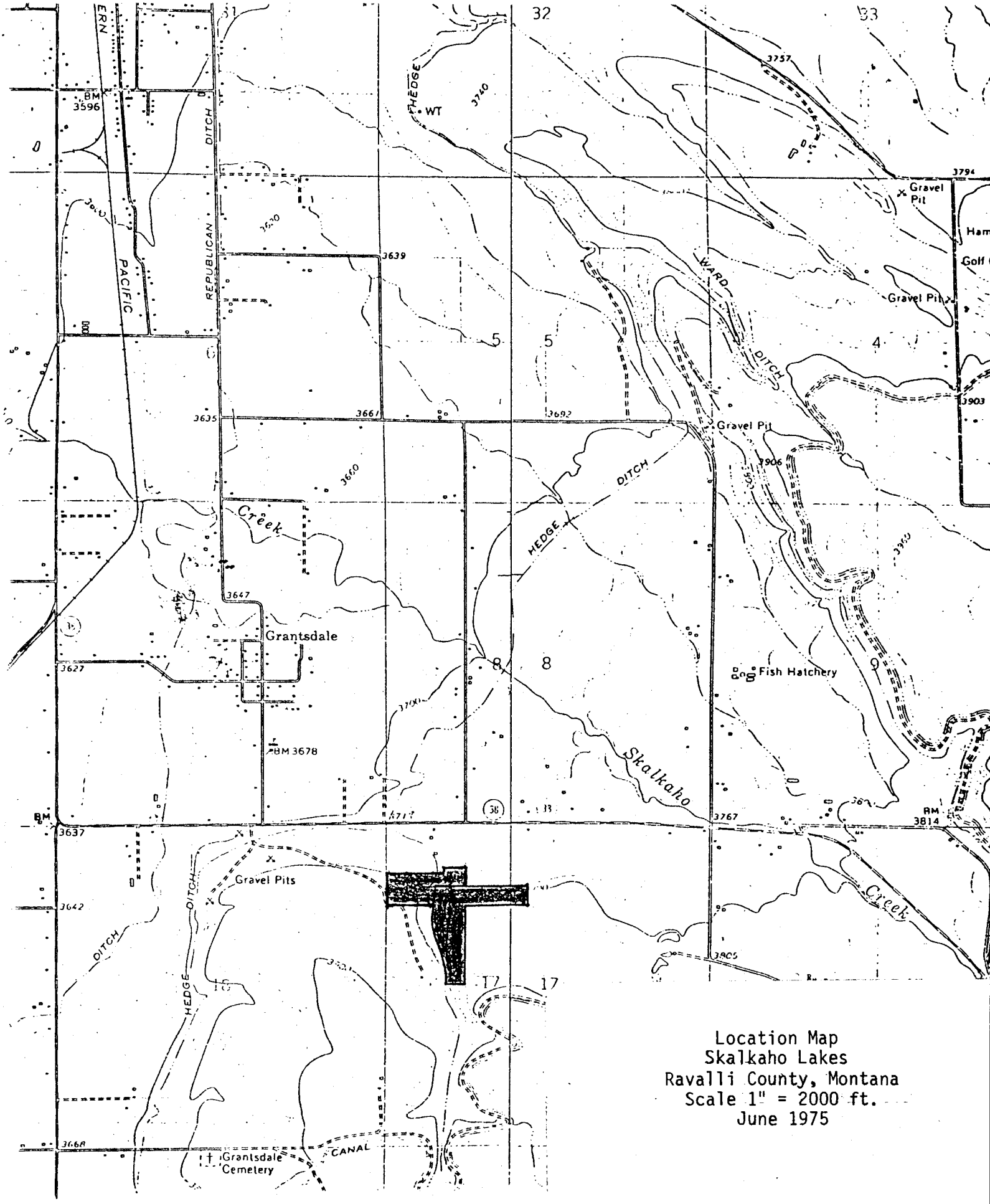
B. Approve the proposal subject to (1) the installation of an Armon evapotranspiration system for sewage disposal on Lot 16, (2) the construction of an interceptor ditch along the east side of the road from Lots 11-16 and (3) the placement of drainfields for Lots 1-4 on top of the hill.

C. Refuse to approve the plat.

Conclusion

This Agency Impact Determination will be circulated for a period of 10 days, after which a certificate will be approved for a subdivision plat in accordance with the conditions given in alternative B.

This Agency Impact Determination has been prepared by Tom Ellerhoff, with information supplied by Alfred Keppner, State Subdivision Bureau; Chuck Stahl, Ravalli County sanitarian; John Crawford, geological engineer for Professional Consultants, Inc.; various county and state officials, and the developer.



Location Map
Skalkaho Lakes
Ravalli County, Montana
Scale 1" = 2000 ft.
June 1975