

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION
WATER RESOURCES DIVISION
WATER RIGHTS BUREAU

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of action:** WATER RIGHT PERMIT APPLICATION NO.
41S-G(W)135290-00
2. **Applicant/Contact name and address:**
Joe & Vesta Wichman
PO Box 135
Moore, MT 59464
3. **Water source name:** Judith River
4. **Location affected by action:** SE SE NE SECTION 18, T15N, R16E, FERGUS COUNTY
approximately 6 miles northwest of Moore, MT
5. **Narrative summary of the proposed project and action to be taken:** The DNRC shall issue a water use permit if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-402, MCA are met. This application is to temporarily add a point of diversion and change the use of 200 GPM up to 5.9 acre-feet from flood irrigation to dust control and compaction for road construction. The water will be used by Konitz Contracting. The volume of water required will be offset by not irrigating 1.6 acres. The temporary change will expire October 20, 2000.
6. **Agencies consulted during preparation of the environmental assessment:**
Montana Natural Heritage Program
Montana Rivers Information System
Montana Department of Environmental Quality

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This environmental review addresses the impacts only at the point of diversion. Other potential impacts due to this road construction project may be considered secondary impacts and should be addressed by the Environmental Assessment completed by the Federal Lands Highway Administration.

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Soils/Geologic Features:

Degradation of soil quality or alteration of soil stability, moisture content, geologic substructure, unique geologic features, archeological sites?

NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The Fergus County Soil Survey identifies the soil as **Nesdo-Sudworth Complex**. This soil is a gravelly loam. The site survey found the same. This soil should be well suited to support heavily loaded water trucks even when conditions are wet. Therefore there will be little if any alteration of soil stability on the site. No unique geologic features were identified during the site survey.

Erosion:

Alteration of erosion or siltation patterns which modify stream beds or lake shores?

NO IMPACT

The suction hose from the pump should not alter the stream bed.

Vegetation/Noxious weeds:

Change in or adverse affect on diversity and production of local plant species including any unique or endangered species (including trees, shrubs, grass, and aquatic plants)? Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?

NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Vegetation in the area consists of reed canarygrass, western wheatgrass, and other native species. Little residual vegetation at the site made plant identification difficult. No noxious weeds were found during the site survey. The Montana Natural Heritage Program identified no plant species of concern in the site area. The site survey found the same. Vegetation will be damaged where the water trucks travel and fill. The vegetation will eventually cover these areas in time even if not re-seeded.

Air:

Deterioration of air quality, or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.

NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The exhaust emissions from the pump and water trucks will likely not be noticeable at the project site.

Water:

Alteration of surface water or groundwater quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity or quantity or distribution?

NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The only alteration of surface water will be in the distribution pattern. A small portion of the water previously used for irrigation will now be diverted about a quarter mile farther downstream for road construction. The diversion will have a lower flow rate than was historically diverted, but will be over a longer time period to achieve the historical volume. The Montana Rivers Information System shows that this reach of the Judith River has been designated by the Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks as being chronically de-watered. The change in the distribution pattern will be minimal. The Judith River has not been identified as an impaired stream needing a TMDL plan by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality.

Floodplain:

Changes in drainage patterns, course or magnitude of flood flows, or exposure of people/property to hazards (flood)?

NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The pump site is in the floodplain. The equipment and / or employees of the contractor could be exposed to floods. However, this is unlikely given the current drought conditions and lack of snow pack and the fact that this is a temporary change expiring in the Fall.

Wildlife Habitat/Migration:

Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat? Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife?

NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The Montana Rivers Information System lists this reach of the Judith River as having a high fishery value as rated by DFWP. The intermittent pumping will have no impact on the fish habitat.

Endangered Species:

Adverse effects on any unique or endangered species?

NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The Montana River Information System identified no fish species of concern in this reach of the Judith River. The Montana Natural Heritage program web-site identified no bird species of concern in the project area. A field survey found no evidence of any endangered species.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

Existing Land Use:

Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?

NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The productivity of the 1.6 acres that will not be irrigated will decrease. This impact will only last one year.

Historical Significance:

Destruction or alteration of a natural area of scientific or educational value or prehistoric or paleontological importance?

NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

A literature search by the State Historic Preservation Office found a cultural resource inventory had been conducted in the immediate area in 1992. Because of this, there is a low likelihood of cultural properties being affected. A site survey found no evidence of historical cultural resources.

Populace:

Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?
Alteration of social structure of community?

NO IMPACT

Transportation:

Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?

NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

An increased traffic hazard will result where the water trucks enter and leave the public road.

Safety:

Creation of any health hazard or affect on existing emergency response or evacuation plans?

NO IMPACT

Public Services:

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? Have an effect upon local or state tax base?

NO IMPACT

Utilities:

Creates need for new or altered facilities for any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?

NO IMPACT

Aesthetics:

Alteration of any scenic vista or recreation opportunity or creation of an aesthetically offensive site to the public?

NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The pump site could be considered aesthetically offensive to the public passing on the public road or recreating on the Judith River.

Other:

NO

2. **Secondary and cumulative impacts:** The impacts created by the road construction project itself can be considered secondary impacts.
3. **Reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative:** The applicant could find another source of water. This alternative would be possibly difficult and/ or expensive. The no action alternative would result in the contractor being unable to correctly and safely complete the road construction project.

PART III. CONCLUSION

Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? NO

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

An EA is adequate for this action. There will be no significant impacts, therefore, and EIS is not required.

PREPARED BY:

NAME: Andy Brummond
TITLE: Water Resources Specialist
DATE: [Automatic date code removed]