

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.  
76LJ-P111084-00
2. **Applicant/Contact name and address:**  
Iron Horse at Whitefish, LLC  
341 Central Avenue  
Whitefish, MT 59937
3. **Water source name:** TWO GROUNDWATER WELLS
4. **Location affected by action:** SESWNE, SEC 13, T31N, R22W, FLATHEAD COUNTY  
SWSWNE, SEC 13, T31N, R22W, FLATHEAD COUNTY
5. **Narrative summary of the proposed project and action to be taken:** THE DNRC SHALL ISSUE A WATER USE PERMIT IF THE APPLICANT PROVES THE CRITERIA IN 85-2-311, MCA ARE MET. THIS APPLICATION IS TO OBTAIN THE LEGAL RIGHT TO USE THE WATER IN A NEW GROUNDWATER WELL AND TO INCREASE THE FLOW-RATE AND VOLUME FROM AN EXISTING PERMITTED WELL. UNDER THIS WATER RIGHT, THE TWO WELLS WILL BE MANIFOLD TOGETHER AND WILL ASSIST IN SUPPLYING A 375 RESIDENT SUBDIVISION WITH DOMESTIC WATER AT A RATE OF 350 GPM UP TO 383.55 ACRE-FEET PER YEAR. THIS EA CHECKLIST WILL ADDRESS THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS TO THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT WITH RESPECT TO THE POINT OF DIVERSION.
6. **Agencies consulted during preparation of the environmental assessment:**  
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE (SHPO)  
NATURAL RESOURCE INFORMATION SYSTEM (NRIS)  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE (NHP)  
ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLISTS BY DNRC AND DEQ (for Iron Horse Subdivision Water Right No. 76LJ-P104098-00, AND 76LJ-G(W)147127-00)

**PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

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, THE TOPSOIL IN THIS DEVELOPMENT WAS TRUCKED IN FROM CRESTON. THE WELLS WILL NOT ALTER SOIL QUALITY OR STABILITY. THE WATER WILL BE USED

FOR DOMESTIC AND LAWN AND GARDEN FOR EACH OF THE LOTS. THE MOISTURE CONTENT OF THE SOIL WILL BE ENHANCED. A QUERY WITH SHPO REVEALED ONE SITE OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE IN THE ENTIRE SUBDIVISION. THE SITE WAS LOCATED IN THE SE QUARTER OF SECTION 12, TOWNSHIP 31N, RANGE 22W. IT WAS DESCRIBED AS AN HISTORIC EURO-AMERICAN SITE OWNED BY THE FOREST SERVICE. THE PROJECT SITE HAS BEEN THROUGH A NUMBER OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS FOR THE PERMITTING OF THE SUBDIVISION AND THE PREVIOUS WATER RIGHT. THE ADDITION OF THIS WELL WILL NOT IMPACT SOILS/GEOLOGIC FEATURES.

**Erosion:**

Alteration of erosion or siltation patterns that modify streambeds or lake shores?

NO, THE WELLS ARE NOT LOCATED ON A STREAMBANK OR LAKESHORE, THEREFORE THEY WILL NOT EFFECT EROSION OR SILTATION PATTERNS.

**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?

A QUERY WITH NHP RESULTED IN SEVERAL PLANT SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN. A COPY OF THE NHP REPORT IS ATTACHED. THE ONLY PLANT SPECIES THAT COULD POTENTIALLY BE AFFECTED BY THE SUBDIVISION IS THE SMALL YELLOW LADY'S SLIPPER. THE LOCATION WAS NOT SPECIFIC. SINCE THE SUBDIVISION HAS BEEN PERMITTED, THE WELL USE WILL ONLY HELP TO ELIMINATE NOXIOUS WEEDS BY ALLOWING HOMEOWNERS TO KEEP WELL-MANICURED LAWNS.

**Air:**

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

NO, THE ONLY POTENTIAL IMPACT WOULD BE SECONDARY FROM THE SUBDIVISION. THIS ISSUE WAS ADDRESSED IN THE EA SUBMITTED BY DEQ. TRUCKS WOULD APPLY WATER DURING DRY PERIODS TO THE ROADS. DURING CONSTRUCTION, THE SOIL WOULD BE WETTED PRIOR TO HAULING. INGRESS AND EGRESS WOULD BE CLEANED BY WATER AND/OR SWEEPING. THE USE OF THE WELLS WILL HAVE NO EFFECT ON AIR QUALITY.

**Water:**

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

THE GROUNDWATER QUANTITY WILL BE ALTERED BY 383.5 ACRE-FEET PER YEAR. ACCORDING TO THE WELL TEST REPORT, THIS WILL NOT CAUSE AN ADVERSE IMPACT TO THE AQUIFER OR TO OTHER WATER USERS IN THE AREA. THE WELLS WERE DRILLED TO STATE STANDARD SPECIFICATIONS to ELIMINATE GROUNDWATER CONTAMINATION.

**Floodplain:**

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

NO, THE PROPERTY IS NOT LOCATED ALONG A SURFACE WATER SOURCE AND DOES NOT LIE WITHIN A FLOODPLAIN. THE USE OF THE WELL WILL NOT IMPACT DRAINAGE PATTERNS. THERE MAY BE A SECONDARY CUMULATIVE IMPACT FROM THE NUMBER OF IMPERVIOUS SURFACES CREATED BY THE SUBDIVISION. THIS SHOULD NOT POSE A PROBLEM SINCE THE SUBDIVISION DESIGNS HAVE BEEN APPROVED BY THE NECESSARY AGENCIES.

**Wildlife Habitat/Migration:**

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

THE WELL ITSELF WILL NOT IMPACT FISH OR WILDLIFE HABITAT. THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF THE SUBDIVISION ON WILDLIFE HABITAT WAS ADDRESSED IN A PREVIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT. SINCE THE SUBDIVISION HAS BEEN APPROVED, THERE WILL NOT BE ADVERSE AFFECTS ON WILDLIFE HABITATS FROM THIS PROPOSED WELL USE.

**Endangered Species:**

Adverse effects on any unique or endangered species?

NO, A QUERY WITH THE NHP RESULTED IN NO KNOWN SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN AT THE LOCATION OF THE SUBDIVISION. SEVERAL SPECIES WERE LISTED OUTSIDE THE BOUNDARIES. THESE SPECIES WILL NOT BE AFFECTED BY THE PROPOSED WELL USE.

**HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

**Existing Land Use:**

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

THE ONCE FORESTED TIMBERLAND IS NOW A MAJOR SUBDIVISION. THIS WATER RIGHT WILL SUPPLY THE SUBDIVISION WITH DOMESTIC WATER.

**Historical Significance:**

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

NO, A QUERY WITH SHOP RESULTED IN NO KNOWN SITES OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE NEAR THE PROJECT LOCATION.

**Populace:**

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

YES. THIS WATER RIGHT WILL ALLOW A MAJOR SUBDIVISION TO SUPPLY ALL OF THE LOTS WITH WATER. PRIOR TO THIS SUBDIVISION, THERE WAS MINIMAL POPULATION DENSITY IN THIS AREA. IT IS SURROUNDED BY FORESTLAND.

**Transportation:**

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

YES. THIS DEVELOPMENT WILL INCREASE TRANSPORTATION OF GOODS FOR SEVERAL YEARS WHILE CONSTRUCTION IS OCCURING. HUMAN TRANSPORTATION WILL INCREASE INDEFINATELY. THE ROAD LEADING TO THE SUBDIVISION FROM WHITEFISH IS A NARROW, TWO-LANE ROAD WITHOUT PASSING OPPORTUNITIES. SINCE IT IS THE ONLY ROAD TO THE BIG MOUNTAIN SKI RESORT, WINTER TRAFFIC WILL BE HEAVIER.

**Safety:**

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

YES. THE QRU FOR THAT LOCATION WILL NEED TO BE AMPLIFIED DUE TO THE INCREASE OF 375 NEW HOMES.

**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?

YES. THE DEVELOPMENT WILL REQUIRE THE EXPANSION OF ALL GOVERNMENTAL SERVICES.

**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?

YES. UTILITIES NEED TO BE EXPANDED THROUGHOUT THE SUBDIVISION.

**Aesthetics:**

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

YES. A GOLF COURSE IS ALSO INCLUDED IN THE SUBDIVISION PLANS, WHICH WILL CREATE A RECREATION OPPORTUNITY FOR THE RESIDENTS.

**Other:**

NO

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2. **Secondary and cumulative impacts:** ALL SECONDARY IMPACTS ARE SIMILAR TO ANY TYPE OF URBAN SPRAWL INTO THE FORESTED MOUNTAINSIDES. SEE ATTACHMENTS

**3. Reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative:**

- 1) ISSUE THE PERMIT, THERE IS A NET LONG TERM POSITIVE IMPACT TO THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT AND LITTLE TO NO IMPACT TO THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT.
- 2) REJECT THE APPLICATION DUE TO UNKNOWN LONG TERM CUMULATIVE IMPACTS TO THE HUMAN OR PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT. THE APPLICANT WILL NEED TO FIND ANOTHER SOURCE OF WATER OR DECREASE THEIR USE.

**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 SINCE THE SUBDIVISION HAS BEEN ASSESSED AND APPROVED.

PREPARED BY:

NAME: CRISTY CARTER  
TITLE: WATER RESOURCES SPECIALIST  
DATE: [Automatic date code removed]