

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Water Resources Division
Water Rights Bureau

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Note: Instructions to DNRC staff for preparing this EA can be found at:
http://www.dnrc.state.mt.us/eis_ea.html

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. *Applicant/Contact name and address:* Luzenac America
28769 Sappington Rd.
Three Forks, Mt. 59752
2. *Type of action:* Application For Beneficial Water Use Permit #30007592-41G
3. *Water source name:* Well
4. *Location affected by project:* NE Sec 31 T1N R1W, Gallatin County
5. *Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:* A 80 foot deep well was drilled to supply 150 GPM, up to 200 acre-feet of water for processing talc. This well is located in the NWSENE Sec 31 T1N R1W, Gallatin County. The DNRC shall issue a permit if the applicant proves that the criteria in #85-2-311, MCA are met.
6. *Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:*
(include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction) Montana State Historical Preservation Office, Montana Department of Fish Wildlife & Parks, Montana Natural Heritage Program, Gallatin County Planning Office, Montana Department of Environmental Quality.

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: The source of water is a groundwater well, which is not listed as chronically or periodically dewatered by the DFWP.

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: This well is not listed on the DEQ, 303(d) list.

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: This 80 foot deep well is not immediately or directly connected with the Jefferson River, and will not impact it. The supply of groundwater will be reduced by 150 GPM, up to 200 acre feet. Groundwater quality will not be impacted.

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: Water will be diverted from the well using a 7.5 HP pump. The well was drilled by a licensed driller.

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: The Montana Natural Heritage Program was contacted. They found no species of concern within the area.

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 well was not drilled in a wetland, and will have no impact on existing wetlands.

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

Determination: This well does not involve a pond, with no impacts to existing resources.

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: It is unlikely that saline seep would be found in this area. The drilling of this well will not degrade soil quality, alter soil stability, or moisture content.

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: A small area was disturbed as a result of drilling this well. All disturbed areas will need to be reseeded by the applicant.

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

Determination: There should be no significant impact on air quality.

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

Determination: Since the well has already been drilled any archeological or historical sites have already been destroyed. SHPO does not want to be notified.

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 additional impacts on other environmental resources were identified.

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 Gallatin County Planning board has no restrictions against drilling a well for industrial purposes.

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: This area is private property, with no access to public recreational or wilderness activities. No impact is expected.

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

Determination: No impact on human health is expected.

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: Private property rights are not impacted by this proposed action.

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 impact
- (b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? No impact
- (c) Existing land uses? No impact
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? No impact
- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? No impact
- (f) Demands for government services? No impact
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? No impact
- (h) Utilities? No impact
- (i) Transportation? No impact
- (j) Safety? No impact
- (k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? No impact

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

Secondary Impacts No secondary impacts have been identified

Cumulative Impacts No cumulative impacts have been identified

3. *Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:* Mitigation or stipulations are not planned at this time.

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:* This additional water is needed to develop a slurry circuit in the mill. If this permit was denied, Luzenac would continue mining and milling according to the existing approved operating permits.

PART III. Conclusion

1. Preferred Alternative The preferred alternative would be to permit the new well so the slurry process could go forward.

2. Comments and Responses None received to date.

3. Finding:

Yes___ No 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: Significant impacts have not been identified. An EIS is not required for this action.

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

Name: Jan R. Mack

Title: Water Resources Specialist

Date: June 29, 2004