

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:* USDA, Forest Service
PO Box 7669
Missoula, MT 59807
2. *Type of action:* Permit to Appropriate Water No. 76LJ- 30018535
3. *Water source name:* Groundwater Well
4. *Location affected by action:* NE¹/₄ SE¹/₄ NW¹/₄ Section 8, Township 30N, Range 19W, Flathead County.
5. *Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:*
The DNRC shall issue a water use permit if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-311, MCA are met. The scope of this environmental assessment will be limited to the development of one well manifold into an existing water distribution system. The applicant is requesting 750 gpm up to 55.45-acre-feet from January 1 to December 31 inclusive of each year for multiple domestic. The place of use included in this application is all of the area currently served by the Hungry Horse Water distribution system plus some additional areas adjacent to the current service area where new developments are currently under construction. The means of diversion is an existing well with a standard twelve-inch steel casing within an oversized borehole. The borehole is provided as an annular space for neat cement grout to provide a sanitary surface seal. A 60 horsepower pump will produce 750 gpm from the well. The well was drilled by a licensed well driller to a depth of 200 feet below ground surface (bgs). There are many benefits to the installation of a professionally designed water distribution system to meet the demand of future growth. This well will discharge water in to the distribution system designed by Thomas, Dean & Hoskins, Inc. for the benefit of the Town of Hungry Horse.

* An Environmental Assessment for the Hungry Horse Land Conveyance Project is located in the file. It can be viewed at the Kalispell Water Resources Regional Office upon request.

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

State Historic Preservation Office
Montana Natural Heritage Program

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: Not Applicable

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: Not Applicable

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: The well is completed in sand and gravel. During the initial 24-hour test the well produced 1180 gpm and recovered fully within 20 hours after drawing down 3.8 feet. Groundwater recharge through infiltration and snowmelt has been compared to the volume of water used by existing water users. Based on the comparison, there should be no impact on the supply of groundwater. It has been determined by aquifer testing there is no interaction with surface water.

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: Even though the well was drilled in 1957 it was completed in accordance with most of the rules of the Board of Water Well Contractors by a licensed well driller. It has been in place for 49-years and is now going to be used to serve the Town of Hungry Horse. It is part of the Hungry Horse Land Conveyance Project. There will be no impact.

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 appropriation of groundwater, which is the scope of this EA, will not impact surface water flows or have any bearing on plants or animals. An environmental assessment for the Hungry Horse Land Conveyance Project addresses threatened and endangered species. The assessment requires information on geology, surface water, vegetation, wildlife, cultural features, sewage treatment, solid waste, drainage, roads, schools, economic benefits from increase revenue, land use related to a comprehensive plan, parks and recreation, and utilities. This information is available from the USDA, Forest Service and a copy is also located in the file at the Kalispell Water Resources Regional Office.

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: There are no wetlands in the area that will be affected.

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

Determination: Not Applicable

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: The stability of the soils and moisture content may experience minor impact in specific areas based on the introduction of turf to create lawns as well as other landscaping activities that require water usage around homes.

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: There will be no effect beyond lot development and waterline installation.

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

Determination: No impact.

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

Determination: A heritage resource inventory was conducted within the project area. The buildings and features associated with government town and the contractor's camp were photographed and recorded as site 24 FH 985. The existing conditions and history of the site were compared with the historic condition as revealed in photographs taken by the Bureau of Reclamation during the site's construction and use. It was concluded by the Forest Heritage staff that there have been too many losses, changes, and intrusions to both the site and individual buildings for the site to qualify for listing on the National Register. During the site's historic

period there were 199 structures in government town and approximately 65 in the contractors camp. Of these, only ten remain and of these ten, only two, the warehouse and the fire cache, have not been altered to any significant degree. Since no significant heritage resources exist on the parcel there is no effects on heritage resources.

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: None

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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

Determination: This subdivision was approved by Flathead County. A functional water system is included as a condition of approval.

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: There will be no impact to the quality of recreation or wilderness activities nor will access be denied to any established recreation areas except by Forest Service road closures that occur throughout public domain in Flathead County.

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

Determination: There will be no effect on human health.

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: None

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

(b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? No

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

2. ***Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:*** There are no apparent indirect impacts.
3. ***Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*** None are necessary.
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:*** There are no reasonable alternatives. The no action alternative would result in future problems with supply and demand.

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: No significant impacts have been identified; therefore, no EIS is necessary.

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

Name: Rich Russell
Title: Water Resources Specialist
Date: February 24, 2006