

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

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. Applicant/Contact name and address: Mountain Water Company
1345 West Broadway
2. Type of action: Missoula, MT 59802
3. Water source name: Groundwater
4. Location affected by project: E2 Sec 13 & All of Sec 24, T13N R19W
All of Sec 18, S2 Sec 16 & 17, N2 of Sec 19, 20 & 21, W2 Sec 22, T13N, E18W
5. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:

Mountain Water Company submitted an Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit to DNRC seeking approval from the State of Montana to divert 300 gpm up to 484 acre-feet per year of groundwater for municipal purposes. Groundwater will be diverted from an approximately 165 feet deep well in the SW1/4 of Section 18, T13N, R18W. The well will be connected to the existing Mountain Water Company System service area, which includes all areas of the City of Missoula and East Missoula. DNRC shall issue a water use permit if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-311 MCA are met.

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

Montana Historical Society
Montana Natural Heritage Program

Cultural Resource File Search
Species of Concern

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

<h3>PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</h3>

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.*

Not applicable. The source of supply is groundwater diverted from a well.

Determination: No impact.

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.*

Not applicable. The source of supply is groundwater diverted from a well.

Determination:

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.*

The applicant was granted a variance from aquifer testing requirements and was allowed to use data obtained from a pump test recently conducted on a nearby well. The variance was granted because the data obtained from the other pump test provides reliable aquifer parameters to predict affects to the groundwater aquifer from pumping the proposed well. The nearby well that was tested maintained a consistent yield of 1500 gpm for 72 hours. Mountain Water Company is applying for a flow rate of 300 gpm from a well that will be completed in the same groundwater aquifer as the well that was tested. Impacts to the groundwater aquifer were projected out for the entire 365-day period of appropriation and beyond. The results of the applicant's groundwater modeling indicate that after pumping continuously for 22 years the groundwater aquifer would be drawn down 1.79 feet at the well casing. Groundwater drawdown was projected out to a level of 0.01 feet. Near the well, drawdown will be approximately 0.4 feet. Drawdown decreases the further you travel from the well, with 0.01 feet of drawdown occurring 2 miles to the east near the Milltown Dam, and 1 mile to the west in the Hellgate Canyon. This amount of drawdown, by itself, is not great enough to impact other well users in the project vicinity. No sources of groundwater contamination were identified, and all of the Mountain Water Service area is connected to city sewer. The source of groundwater is hydraulically connected to surface water, including the Clark Fork River. The applicant estimates a daily depletion of 38,965 cubic feet, which equals a depletion rate of 202.42 gpm and an annual depletion of 326.50 acre-feet. This depletion rate equals 0.0155% of daily river flow and will not have a measurable impact on the

Clark Fork River. However, the applicant will be required to mitigate this depletion so there is no impact to surface water flowing in the Clark Fork River.

Determination: No significant impact.

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.*

A well driller, licensed in accordance with MCA Administrative rules of Montana Title 36, Chapter 21, will construct the well. The well will be connected to the existing Mountain Water Company service system. The applicant will be required to measure water use to ensure that the proposed appropriation is not exceeded if a permit is granted. The depletion of water from the Clark Fork River will not be great enough to cause channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, or impacts to riparian areas; however the applicant will be required to mitigate the stream depletion. There are no dams associated with this project. The applicant has demonstrated that there is sufficient groundwater available for the proposed project and that existing wells will not be impacted.

Determination: 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."*

The Montana Natural Heritage Program was contacted to determine if there are any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern", that could be impacted by the proposed project.

The following sensitive plant and animal species occur within Township 13 North, Range 18 West, where the proposed well will be drilled in Section 18;

Westslope Cutthroat Trout, Bull Trout, Lynx, Flammulated Owl and Fringed Myotis (a bat).

These animal species are found within the same Township and Range as the proposed project, but whether any are located on the applicant's property is not known.

Since depletions to the Clark Fork River from pumping the well are not significant enough to cause flow modifications, create barriers or damage riparian vegetation, Cutthroat and Bull Trout should not be impacted.

Lynx will not be impacted because the project location is not in preferred Lynx habitat. The well will be located in the Canyon River housing and golf development, just off Deer Creek Road.

Any ground disturbance and/or loss of habitat will be limited to the actual site of the well, which will be less than one acre. The infrastructure for delivering water to residents of Missoula and East Missoula is already in place and will not require additional construction or ground disturbance. Since construction associated with this project is very limited, none of the sensitive animal species found in T13N, R18W should be impacted.

Determination: No significant impact.

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: No impact. The project does not involve any wetlands.

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

Determination: No impact. The project does not involve any ponds.

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.*

Construction associated with the proposed project is limited to drilling the well and connecting it to the existing Mountain Water Company service system. There will be no increase in the amount of water applied to any soils if the water right is granted. The only irrigation associated with this project will be lawn and garden use in the cities of Missoula and East Missoula. Saline seep is not caused by lawn and garden irrigation on the Missoula Valley soils. All waste water from municipal (domestic, commercial and lawn and garden) use in the cities of Missoula and East Missoula is routed through the City of Missoula waste treatment plant.

Determination: No impact.

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.*

Ground disturbance that may impact existing vegetation will be limited to the well site and activity associated with well drilling, and should occur on less than 1 acre. The proposed well location is in the Canyon River subdivision and golf course, where native vegetation has already been replaced with landscaping. The Montana Natural Heritage Program did not indicate the presence of any sensitive or endangered plant species in the vicinity of the project site.

Determination: No impact.

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

No source of increased air pollutants was identified.

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.*

The Montana Historical Society has determined that there are no known historical and/or cultural sites that will be impacted as a result of this project.

Determination: No impact.

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 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: No impact.

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: No impact.

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

Determination: No impact.

PRIVATE PROPERTY - *Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.*

Yes ___ No **XX** *If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.*

Determination: No impact.

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 None identified.

Cumulative Impacts None identified.

3. Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures: None identified.

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:

PART III. Conclusion

1. Preferred Alternative None identified.

2 *Comments and Responses*

3. *Finding:*

Yes ___ No XX 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:

AN EA IS THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF ANALYSIS FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION BECAUSE NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS WERE IDENTIFIED.

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

Name: Jim Nave

Title: Water Resource Specialist

Date: April 17, 2007