

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:  
Flathead County Water District #1 - Evergreen  
ATTN: Roberta Struck  
130 Nicholson Dr.  
Kalispell, MT 59901
2. Type of action: Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit (76LJ 30064206) seeks to divert 850 GPM from each of two wells for use in the Evergreen water distribution system. The wells have already been drilled and connected to the water distribution system. The water right application requests additional flow rate, but it does not request any additional annual volume.
3. Water source name: The wells have been completed at depths of 420 and 405 feet to divert water from the deep Flathead aquifer. This aquifer is known to discharge water into Flathead Lake.
4. Location affected by project: Water will be diverted from wells located approximately 200 feet west of the Whitefish River in the SE<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>SW<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>SE<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> of Section 32, T29N, R21W, Flathead County.
5. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits: The Applicant proposes to divert water from each of two wells up to 850 GPM and 1,700 GPM in total for year-round municipal use. The applicant is not requesting any additional annual volume. Municipal purposes are recognized as a beneficial use of water and the DNRC shall issue the water right if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-311 MCA are met.
6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:  
Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks – Montana Fisheries Information System  
Montana Department of Environmental Quality - Clean Water Act Information Center website  
Montana National 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:* No impact. Permit application is for groundwater. While groundwater may contribute to surface water flows, the application only requests additional flow rate; the annual consumption of water will not increase compared to currently permitted conditions. The nearest surface water source (Whitefish River) is not listed by DFWP as dewatered (<http://fwp.mt.gov/fishing/mFish/>). No impact to surface water quantity will result from issuance of this permit.

**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:* No impact. Permit application is for groundwater. While groundwater may contribute to surface water flows, the application only requests additional flow rate; the annual consumption of water will not increase compared to currently permitted conditions. Montana DEQ lists Whitefish River and Flathead Lake as impaired with respect to metals, nitrogen/phosphorus, PCBs, and/or temperature ([http://cwaic.mt.gov/wqrep/2012/Appendix\\_A\\_ImpairedWaters.pdf](http://cwaic.mt.gov/wqrep/2012/Appendix_A_ImpairedWaters.pdf)), however no impact to surface water quality will result from issuance of this permit.

**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:* No impact. The permit application requests additional flow rate and does not request additional volume. Therefore, annual consumption of groundwater will not increase from the currently permitted conditions. Adjacent surface water flows will not be affected.

**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:* No impact. Wells were constructed by a licensed well driller in conformity with Montana standards.

### 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:* No impact. There are five animal (Great Blue Heron, Westslope Cutthroat Trout, Pygmy Whitefish, Bull Trout, and Lake Trout) species of concern, three animal Potential Species of Concern (Barrow's Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, and Threeridge Valvata), and one Special Status Specie (Bald Eagle) listed by the Montana National Heritage Program website (<http://mtnhp.org/SpeciesOfConcern>, search date 1/17/13) for Township 29N, Range 21W. Four plant Species of Concern (Maidenhair Spleenwort, Deer Indian Paintbrush, Latah Tule Pea, Aloina Moss) and three Potential Species of Concern (Small yellow Lady's Slipper, Amblyodon Moss, Callicladium Moss) exist in Township 29N, Range 21W. As this proposed application is for groundwater, no impacts will occur to threatened or endangered species, or any "species of special concern."

**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:* Not applicable. No wetlands are involved in this project.

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

*Determination:* Not applicable. No ponds are involved in this project.

**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:* No impact. Groundwater will be pumped from a deep aquifer which is separated from surface soils by an aquitard (clay layer).

**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:* No impact. Establishment and/or spread of noxious weeds will not occur as a result of pumping groundwater.

**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. No deterioration of air quality will result from pumping groundwater.

**HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES** - *Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project if it is on State or Federal Lands. If it is not on State or Federal Lands simply state NA-project not located on State or Federal Lands.*

*Determination:* NA – project not located on State or Federal Lands.

**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 impact.

## **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. Pumping groundwater for municipal use is a locally accepted beneficial use of water.

**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. The proposed project will not impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.

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

*Determination:* No impact. The project will not impact 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:* The project does not impact government regulations on private property rights.

**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 impacts identified.
- (b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues? No impacts identified.
- (c) Existing land uses? No impacts identified.
- (d) Quantity and distribution of employment? No impacts identified.

- (e) Distribution and density of population and housing? No impacts identified.
- (f) Demands for government services? No impacts identified.
- (g) Industrial and commercial activity? No impacts identified.
- (h) Utilities? No impacts identified.
- (i) Transportation? No impacts identified.
- (j) Safety? No impacts identified.
- (k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? No impacts identified.

**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:*** No mitigation/stipulation measures 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:*** No human/environmental impacts exist as a result of the permit for additional flow rate for pumping groundwater. No prudent alternative to consider exists.

### **PART III. Conclusion**

1. ***Preferred Alternative*** No significant impacts exist that would require an alternative to provide mitigation.
2. ***Comments and Responses*** None at this time.
3. ***Finding:***  
Yes\_\_\_ No X 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:* The EA is the appropriate level of analysis because the proposed project only requests the diversion of additional flow rate from two wells that have already been constructed.

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

*Name:* Troy Benn

*Title:* Hydrologist

*Date:* 2/4/2013