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:* F. H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Co.
PO Box 1429
Columbia Falls, MT 1429

2. *Type of action:* Permit to Appropriate Water 76LJ 30042690

3. *Water source name:* Groundwater Well

4. *Location affected by project:* SE$^{1}/_{4}$, Section 2, Township 30N, Range 21W, Flathead County

5. *Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:*

This application is to obtain a water use permit for an industrial water supply well for servicing the F.H. Stoltze Land and Lumber Company mill located approximately 2.5 miles west, northwest of Columbia Falls. Water from this well will be used to provide log irrigation, for moisture control, and dust abatement on dirt roads and landings. The period of diversion and use for both of these purposes is from January 1 to December 31, inclusive of each year. The applicant proposes to divert water at a rate of 500 gpm up to 46.0 ac-ft per year, and this amount of diversion will be completed in 1 year.

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

Montana Natural Resource Program ..... Species of Concern
US Fish and Wildlife Service ..... Wetlands Mapper
Natural Resource Conservation Service ..... Web Soil Survey
James Heffner ..... DNRC Hydrogeologist

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: N/A.

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: N/A.

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 well will derive groundwater from the aquifer at a rate not to exceed 500 gpm. The well was completed in a shallow unconfined aquifer to a depth of approximately 12 ft, with an available water column of approximately 7-8 ft. The applicant determined a zone of influence to be oblong and irregular due to site specific hydrological characteristics. The annual volume of water passing through the potential zone of influence was calculated as 359.6 ac-ft. The proposed diverted amount of 46 ac-ft combined with existing appropriations totals 19 ac-ft per year, representing 18% of annual available volume.

Determination: No 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.*

The point of diversion is a large diameter well constructed from a large heavy gage steel tank that is nominally 6 feet in diameter, and approximately 12 feet long. Large slots or openings were cut into the sides of the tank, and the tank was up ended and buried immediately adjacent to the rectangular pond. The well was fitted with a large capacity sump pump capable of pumping a sustained rate of about 650 gpm with a 4 inch steel pipe discharge line that is reduced and controlled by a three inch gate valve. The long term intent is to use the well as a water source to fill a 3,000 gallon tanker truck for use in spraying roads for dust control and for watering logs at storage areas.

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 website was referenced to determine if there are any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern" in vicinity of Township 30N and Range 21W, that could be impacted by the proposed project. The US Fish and Wildlife Service identified the endangered Gray Wolf (*Canis lupus*) and the threatened Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*). In addition the State of Montana, US Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management identified the following species of special concern: Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*); Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*); Westslope Cutthroat Trout (*Onchorhynchus clarkia lewisi*); Last Best Place Damselfly (*Enallagma optimolocus*); Maidenhair Spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes*); Deer Indian Paintbrush (*Castilleja* cervin); Short-styled Thistle (*Cirsium brevistylum*); Slender Cottongrass (*Eriophorum gracile*); Latah Tule Pea (*Lathyrus bijugatus*); *Aloina brevirostris*; *Amblyodon dealbatus* and *Bryum calobryoides*.

Determination: This proposed project will not change land use characteristics and therefore will not impact the endangered Gray Wolf. Furthermore, the source is groundwater with limited impact on surface water, therefore it is expected to not impact Bull Trout habitat. In conclusion, this proposed project it is not expected to adversely impact any of these species.

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: The proposed point of diversion and place of use are not within the boundaries of wetlands mapped by the national wetlands inventory program.

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

Determination: There is a small storm-water basin from which some water will be included in this proposed diversion; however, its habitat qualities are limited and as a result will not impact existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries 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.*

The location of the lumber mill exists on an array of nine different soils. Major soil types associated with this project's proposed place of use include Stryker silt loam, and Half Moon-Haskill complex. Both soils are low in salinity, and therefore, this is not a concern.

Determination: No degradation of soils is expected.

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 change in land-use characteristics associated with this change so there will be no significant impact.

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: There will be no change in land-use characteristics associated with this change so there will be no significant 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

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 project is consistent with planned land use.

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 should be no significant impacts on recreational or wilderness activities from this proposed use.

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_**X**__ 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

(*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:***

Secondary Impacts: None

Cumulative Impacts: None

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

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:***

The "no action" alternative would result in the applicant not being able to conduct dust abatement and log irrigation activities.

PART III. Conclusion

1. ***Preferred Alternative***: As proposed

2 ***Comments and Responses:*** None

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

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

Name: Tim Eichner
Title: Water Resources Specialist
Date: February 3, 2009