

DNRC Water Resources Division
1424 9th Ave. Helena, MT 59620

Project Type – Stock Water Mitigation
EA Publication Date – May 2025
Information Telephone No. 406-444-6601

MEPA ENVIRONMENTALASSESSMENT SUMMARY FORM

Project Name: Off-Season Stock Water Grant Projects- Dixon Bench

Proposed Implementation Date: June 2025

Proponent: DNRC

Type and Purpose of Action: The CITT Off-Season Stock Water Mitigation Grant Program was created to address changes to the Flathead Indian Irrigation Project that will result in the loss of stock water outside of the irrigation season. The proposed action includes 7 grant-funded projects which will address this need. These projects will involve installing new wells, stock tanks, waterline, pumphouses, and fencing; and connecting to electrical service. Projects are grouped because of their similar nature and location.

Location:

SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 27, T 18N, R 21W;
S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 28, T 18N ,R 21W;
NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 36, T 18N, R 21W;
SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 28, T 18N, R 21W;
SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ & NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 20, T 18N, R 21W;
E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 27, T 18N, R 21W;
E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ & NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ & NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$,
Section 19, T 18N, R 21W

County: Sanders

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

RESOURCE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION
1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief summary of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology (Online)• Montana Natural Heritage Program- Wetland and Riparian Mapper (Online)• Montana Natural Heritage Program- Environmental Summary Map Viewer (Online)• Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Map (Online)• USDA Web Soil Survey (Online)• CSKT Water Resource Program, Summary of GW Resources Flathead Indian Reservation, MT,

	<p>April 2022</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Montana Historical Society- National Register of Historic Places (Online) Montana Department of Environmental Quality – Clean Water Act Information Center (Online)
2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:	<p>The project is located entirely on agricultural land. Application has been submitted for all the appropriate permits from the Agencies listed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP) Flathead Reservation Water Management Board (FRWMB)
3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	<p>Action Alternative: The proposed action will involve installing new wells, stock tanks, waterline, pumphouses, and fencing; and connecting to electrical service.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: The no action alternative would be to not install infrastructure to provide off-season stock water. The no action alternative would result in livestock not having a reliable water source outside of irrigation season.</p>

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

<p>4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:</p> <p>Are fragile, compatible or unstable soils present?</p> <p>Are there unusual geologic features?</p> <p>Are there special reclamation considerations?</p>	<p>The proposed project will take place in the Dixon Bench area that is currently used for grazing and agriculture; therefore, disturbance has already occurred in the area. Wells exist throughout the project area with depths ranging up to 375 feet deep.</p> <p>The geology is comprised of alluvium and glacial lake deposits. There are no unusual geologic features or any special reclamation considerations.</p> <p>Soils in the project area consist of Minesinger gravelly loam, Minesinger stony loam Round Butte silty clay loam, Sacheen loamy fine sand, Hewolf gravelly loam, Dryfork silt loam, Jocko gravelly loam, Lamoose silt loam, and Grantsdale silt loam. These soils range from somewhat excessively drained to poorly drained. Salinity ranges from non-saline to very slight saline therefore surface salinization is not a risk.</p>
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	<p>Action Alternative: No significant impact. The wells will be constructed by a licensed driller in accordance with the rules of the Board of Water Well Contractors and the Flathead Reservation Water Management Board, so there should not be significant impacts on the soils or geology in the project area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the geology and soil quality, stability, or moisture.</p>
<p>5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:</p> <p>Are important surface or groundwater resources present?</p> <p>Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?</p> <p>Is there potential impact to wastewater treatment or surface water drainage?</p>	<p>The proposed project will take place in the Dixon Bench area that is currently used for grazing and agriculture; therefore, disturbance has already occurred in the area. Well density in the project area ranges from 6-20 wells per 640-acre section of land.</p> <p>Action Alternative: No significant impact. The source of water is groundwater. Groundwater quality is not likely to be affected by the proposed wells as the wells will be constructed by a licensed driller in accordance with the rules of the Board of Water Well Contractors and the Flathead Reservation Water Management Board. The wells are not located near any surface water sources. The proposed maximum diverted flow rate of 35 gallons per minute, maximum volume of 2.4 acre-feet/year, is not likely to have a significant impact on surface water flows or nearby water users.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative, there will be no impacts to water quality, quantity, and distribution.</p>
<p>6. AIR QUALITY:</p> <p>Will pollutants or particulate be produced?</p> <p>Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I air shed)?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: With the proposed project there is a chance for a temporary introduction of airborne pollutants from dirt work and use of heavy machinery. These impacts will be minimal and temporary only occurring during implementation of the proposed action. The project area is not in a Class I airshed or special zones.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no long-term impacts to air quality.</p>

<p>7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:</p> <p>Will vegetative communities be permanently altered?</p>	<p>The proposed project area is currently being used for grazing and agriculture; vegetative communities have already been significantly disturbed.</p> <p>Action Alternative: No significant long-term impacts to vegetation are anticipated during this project.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to the vegetative communities.</p>
<p>8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:</p> <p>Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project area contains habitat for common wildlife and aquatic species. The project area is not located in sage grouse habitat. Because the project will not involve surface water and will be occurring in an area that is already disturbed and used for agriculture, it has no anticipated negative impacts to important terrestrial, avian, or aquatic wildlife species.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to terrestrial, avian and aquatic habitats.</p>
<p>9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:</p> <p>Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present?</p> <p>Any wetlands?</p> <p>Any sensitive species or Species of Special Concern?</p>	<p>The project area is listed as habitat for the following State Species of Special Concern: Bull Trout, Lewis's Woodpecker, Panic Grass, Fringed Myotis, Townsend's Big-eared Bat, Yuma Myotis, Great Blue Heron, Bobolink, Little Brown Myotis, Long-eared Myotis, Evening Grosbeak, Pileated Woodpecker, Cassin's Finch, Northern Hoary Bat, Western Toad, American Bittern, Grizzly Bear, Clark's Nutcracker, Fisher, and the American Bison.</p> <p>Of the Species of Special Concern in the area, none are listed as federally endangered, and the Bull Trout and Grizzly Bear are listed as federally threatened.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impact on unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources. The projects' activities will have no anticipated negative impacts on unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts on unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources.</p>

<p>10. HISTORICAL / ARCHAEOLOGICAL :</p> <p>Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>The Montana National Register of Historic Places shows no historical, archeological, or paleontological sites within the proposed project areas of interest near the project area.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Historical, archaeological, or paleontological resources uncovered during new or replacement fence installation would be reported to the CSKT Preservation Department, DNRC Archeologist and to the State Historic Preservation Office of Montana.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to historical/archaeological/paleontological resources under this alternative.</p>
<p>11. AESTHETICS:</p> <p>Is the project on a prominent topographic feature?</p> <p>Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas?</p> <p>Will there be excessive noise or light?</p>	<p>The project is not on a prominent topographic feature nor will it be visible from any highly populated or scenic areas.</p> <p>Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to aesthetics.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts to aesthetics.</p>
<p>12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:</p> <p>Will the project use resources that are limited in the area?</p> <p>Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not change the demand/use of land, water, air, or energy in the area. There are no other activities nearby that would affect the project.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no new demands placed on environmental resources of land, water, air, or energy.</p>
<p>13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:</p> <p>Are there other studies, plans or projects on this site?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: This project will not impact any other plans or studies.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts.</p>

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

<p>14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:</p> <p>Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impact to public safety or health in the area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impact to public safety or health in the area.</p>
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<p>15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:</p> <p>Will the project add to or alter these activities?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will have positive impacts on agriculture by providing off-season stock water not currently available September to May.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impact to industrial, commercial and agricultural activities and production.</p>
<p>16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:</p> <p>Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.</p>	<p>Action Alternative: Other than the employment related to the actual implementation of the project, the project will not impact any jobs in the area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no positive impacts to quantity and distribution of employment under this alternative.</p>
<p>17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:</p> <p>Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will have no impacts on the local and state tax base and tax revenues.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the local and state tax base under this alternative.</p>
<p>18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:</p> <p>Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads?</p> <p>Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc.) be needed?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no additional demand for government services.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no additional demand for government services.</p>
<p>19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:</p> <p>Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: There are no locally adopted environmental plans, goals, zoning, or management plans that would be affected by the project.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: Under this alternative there will be no impacts on locally adopted environmental plans and goals.</p>

<p>20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:</p> <p>Is wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through the project location?</p> <p>Is there recreational potential within the project location?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not impact recreational and wilderness activities.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the recreational resources.</p>
<p>21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:</p> <p>Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not impact the density and distribution of population and housing.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the density and distribution of population and housing.</p>
<p>22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:</p> <p>Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not disrupt any traditional lifestyles or communities.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to social structures under this alternative.</p>
<p>23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:</p> <p>Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The project will not impact the cultural uniqueness and diversity of this rural area.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be no impacts to the cultural uniqueness and diversity under this alternative.</p>
<p>24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:</p>	<p>Action Alternative: The installation of new wells, stock tanks, waterline, pumphouses, and fencing; and connecting to electrical service will have no social and/or economic circumstance. The purchase of equipment, materials, supplies, and services will have a positive but temporary impact on the local economy.</p> <p>No Action Alternative: There will be impacts to the economic and social circumstances.</p>

IV. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Action alternative.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

No significant impacts anticipated.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

☐ EIS

☐ More Detailed EA

☒ No Further Analysis

EA Prepared By: Maya Rao, DNRC Hydrologist, Samantha Kemp, Grant Manager 5/21/25
Name Title

EA Approved By: Trevor Watson, Deputy Division Administrator, DNRC Water Resources Division
Name Title

Signature Date:

Attachments: Project Area Map

Additional Information:

This EA will be published for 30 days on the DNRC website at:

<https://dnrc.mt.gov/Environmental-Docs/>

Questions and comments should be directed to:

Maya Rao
Montana DNRC
Water Resources Division
1424 9th Avenue; P.O. Box 201601
Helena, MT 59620-1602
(406) 444-5884
Maya.rao@mt.gov

Thank you for your interest.

Dixon Bench Area Project Map

