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:

GREGORY L. OUELLETTE
430 MOOSE CREEK RD
POLEBRIDGE, MT 59928

2. Type of action:

Groundwater Application for Beneficial Water Use Permit 76LJ 30161382

3. Water source name:

Groundwater

4. Location affected by project:

The point of diversion and place of use are located on Tract 4A of Government Lot 4 in the NW ¼ of the NW ¼ of Section 1, Township 35 N, Range 22 W, Flathead County.

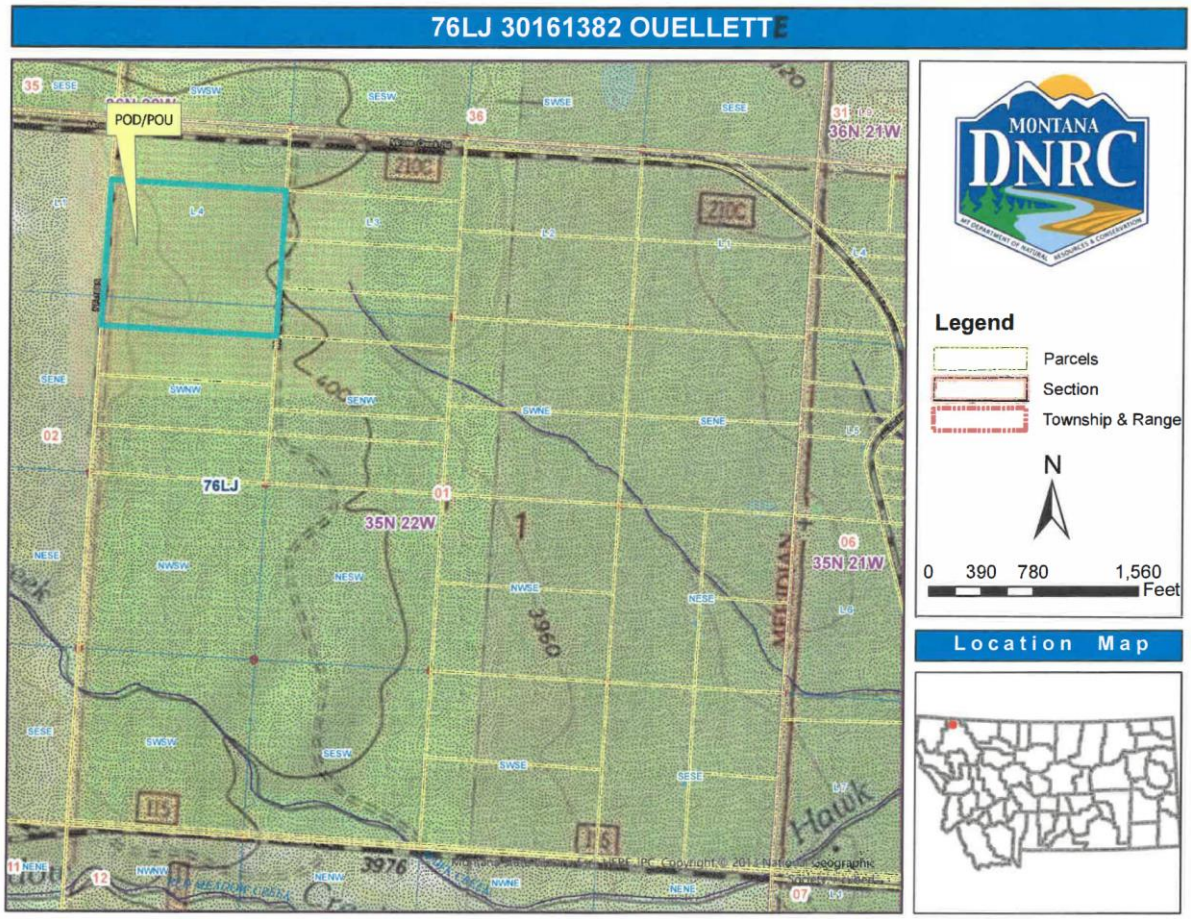

Figure 1. Map of the proposed place of use and point of diversion.

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

The proposed application is to obtain a water use permit for a well located within the Glacier National Park Compact (GNPC) area. The point of diversion and place of use are located in Tract 4A of Government Lot 4 in the NW ¼ of the NW ¼ of Section 1, Township 35 N, Range 22 W, Flathead County, in Basin 76LJ (Flathead River (including North Fork), to and including Flathead Lake)

The Applicant proposes to divert groundwater at 8.00 gallons per minute (GPM) up to 1.05 acre-feet (AF) annually by means of an individual well, GWIC ID # 324548, from January 1 – December 31 for domestic purposes and April 1 to October 31 for lawn & garden purposes. The Applicant proposes to use an annual volume of 1 AF for domestic use and 0.05 AF for 0.02 acres of lawn & garden irrigation.

The DNRC shall issue a water use permit if the Applicant proves the criteria in Montana Code Annotated (MCA) §85.20.401 are met.

6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): National Wetlands Inventory Wetlands Mapper
- Montana Natural Heritage Program: Endangered, Threatened Species, and Species of Special Concern
- Montana Department of Fish Wildlife & Parks (DFWP): Dewatered Stream Information
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ): Clean Water Act Information Center
- U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): Web Soil Survey
- U.S. National Park Service (NPS) Water Rights Branch

Part II. Environmental Review

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.*

The Applicant proposes to divert groundwater from a well that is approximately 1,200 feet south of Moose Creek, a tributary of the North Fork of the Flathead River. The well is 10,100 West of the North Fork of the Flathead River. The North Fork of the Flathead River is not identified by the DFWP as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream. Moose Creek did not have data available.

Determination: No Significant 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.*

The applicant proposes to divert and use groundwater from an aquifer hydraulically connected to the North Fork of the Flathead River for domestic purposes. The reach of the North Fork of the Flathead River, which may be depleted by groundwater pumping, is listed as fully supporting for all beneficial uses for which it has been assessed. It is not anticipated that pumping of the Applicant's groundwater well will have any negative impacts on the water quality of the North Fork of the Flathead River. Moose Creek did not have data available.

Determination: No significant impact.

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 will divert groundwater from the aquifer at a rate of 8.00 GPM. The well is 240 feet deep and approximately 1,200 feet south of Moose Creek and 10,100 feet west of the North Fork of the Flathead River. The National Park Service (NPS) did not object to this application, therefore the flow rate will not be included in the calculation of total consumptive use for the North Fork of the Flathead River per the Glacier National Park Compact.

Determination: No significant impact.

DIVERSION WORKS

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 means of diversion for this project consists of a domestic well drilled to a depth of 240 feet. The well has a 6 inch casing at the ground surface and is screened from 175-180 feet below the ground surface. The maximum pumping rate from the well is 8.00 GPM.

Since this is a groundwater appropriation, there will be no channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, dams, or riparian impacts to the North Fork of the Flathead River.

Determination: No significant 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 reviewed to determine if there are any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants, aquatic species, or any "species of special concern" in Township 35 N, Range 22 W that could be impacted by the proposed project. Sixteen animal species of concern (Table 1) and seventeen plant species of concern (Table 2) were identified within the township and range where the project is located. Of these species, the Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos*), Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), and Westslope Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkia lewisi*) are listed as threatened by the USFWS. An adequate quantity of water will still exist in the adjacent surface water sources to maintain existing populations of threatened fish species, should they exist there currently. The well has already been constructed and the property is situated between existing developed lots; and it is not anticipated that any species of concern will be further impacted by the proposed project.

Table 1. Animal Species of Concern in and around Section 2, Township 31 N, Range 20 W, Flathead County.			
	Common Name	**Scientific Name**	**U.S. FWS – Status under the Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973**
Mammals	Canada Lynx	*Lynx canadensis*	Listed Threatened (LT); Critical Habitat (CH)
	Fisher	*Pekania pennanti*	
	Grizzly Bear	*Ursus arctos*	Listed Threatened (LT)
	Little Brown Myotis	*Myotis lucifugus*	
	Long-eared Myotis	*Myotis evotis*	
	Long-legged Myotis	*Myotis Volans*	
	Northern Bog Lemming	*Synaptomys borealis*	
	Townsend's Big Eared Bat	*Corynorhinus townsendii*	
	Wolverine	*Gulo gulo*	
Birds	Black-backed Woodpecker	*Picoides arcticus*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
	Boreal Chickadee	*Poecile hudsonicus*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
	Brewer's Sparrow	*Spizella breweri*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
	Brown Creeper	*Certhia americana*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
	Cassin's Finch	*Haemorthous cassinii*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA); Birds of Conservation Concern, Region 10
	Clark's Nutcracker	*Nucifraga columbiana*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
	Common Loon	*Gavia immer*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
	Evening Grosbeak	*Coccothraustes vespertinus*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA); Birds of Conservation Concern, Region 10
	Great Blue Heron	*Ardea Herodias*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
	Great Gray Owl	*Strix nebulosa*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
	Harlequin Duck	*Histrionicus histrionicus*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
	Horned Greve	*Podiceps auratus*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
	LeConte's Sparrow	*Ammospiza leconteii*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA); Birds of Conservation Concern, Region 11
	Lewis's Woodpecker	*Melanerpes lewis*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA); Birds of Conservation Concern, Regions 10, 17
	Northern Goshawk	*Accipiter gentilis*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
	Northern Hawk Owl	*Surnia ulula*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
	Pacific Wren	*Troglodytes pacificus*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
	Pileated Woodpecker	*Dryocopus pileatus*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
	Trumpeter Swan	*Cygnus buccinator*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
	Varied Thrush	*Ixoreus naevius*	Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA)
Amphibians	Western Toad	*Anaxyrus boreas*	
Fish	Bull Trout	*Salvelinus confluentus*	Listed Threatened (LT); Critical Habitat (CH)
	Westslope Cutthroat Trout	*Oncorhynchus clarkia lewisi*	
Invertebrates	Suckley Cuckoo Bumble Bee	*Bombus suckleyi*	
	Alberta Snowfly	*Isocapnia integra*	
	Magnum Mantleslug	*Magnipelta mycophaga*	
	Shiny Tightcoil	*Pristiloma wascoense*	
	Reticulate Taildropper	*Prophysaon andersoni*	

Table 2. Plant Species of Concern in and around Section 2, Township 31 N, Range 20 W, Flathead County.			
	Common Name	**Scientific Name**	**U.S. FWS – Status under the Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973**
Vascular Plants	Wavy Moonwort	*Botrychium crenulatum*	
	Wishbone Moonwort	*Botrychium hesperium*	
	Frenchman's Bluff Moonwort	*Botrychium gallicomontanu*	
	Western Moonwort	*Botrychium hesperium*	
	Michigan Moonwort	*Botrychium michiganense*	
	Peculiar Moonwort	*Botrychium paradoxum*	
	Least Moonwort	*Botrychium simplex*	
	Big-leaf Sedge	*Carex amplifolia*	
	Glaucus Beaked Sedge	*Carex rostrata*	
	Thin-flowered Sedge	*Carex tenuiflora*	
	Pale Corydalis	*Corydalis sempervirens*	
	Slim Larkspur	*Delphinium depauperatum*	
	Crested Shieldform	*Dryopteris cristata*	
	Marsh Horsetail	*Equisetum palustre*	
	Meadow Horsetail	*Equisetum pratense*	
	Slender Cottongrass	*Eriophorum gracile*	
	Arctic Sweet Coltsfoot	*Petasites frigidus var. frigid*	
	Whitebark Pine	*Pinus albicaulis*	Listed Threatened (LT)
	Kruckeberg's Swordfern	*Polystichum kruckebergii*	
	Straightbeak Buttercup	*Ranunculus orthorhynchus*	
	Nagoonberry	*Rubus arcticus*	
	Pod Grass	*Scheuchzeria palustris*	
Bryophytes	Narrowleaf Peatmoss	*Sphagnum angustifolium*	
Lichens	Gray Lungwort Lichen	Lobaria hallii	

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.*

There are wetlands near the project area (Figure 2), however, the project occurs outside of these wetlands and will not directly affect or disturb the wetland areas.

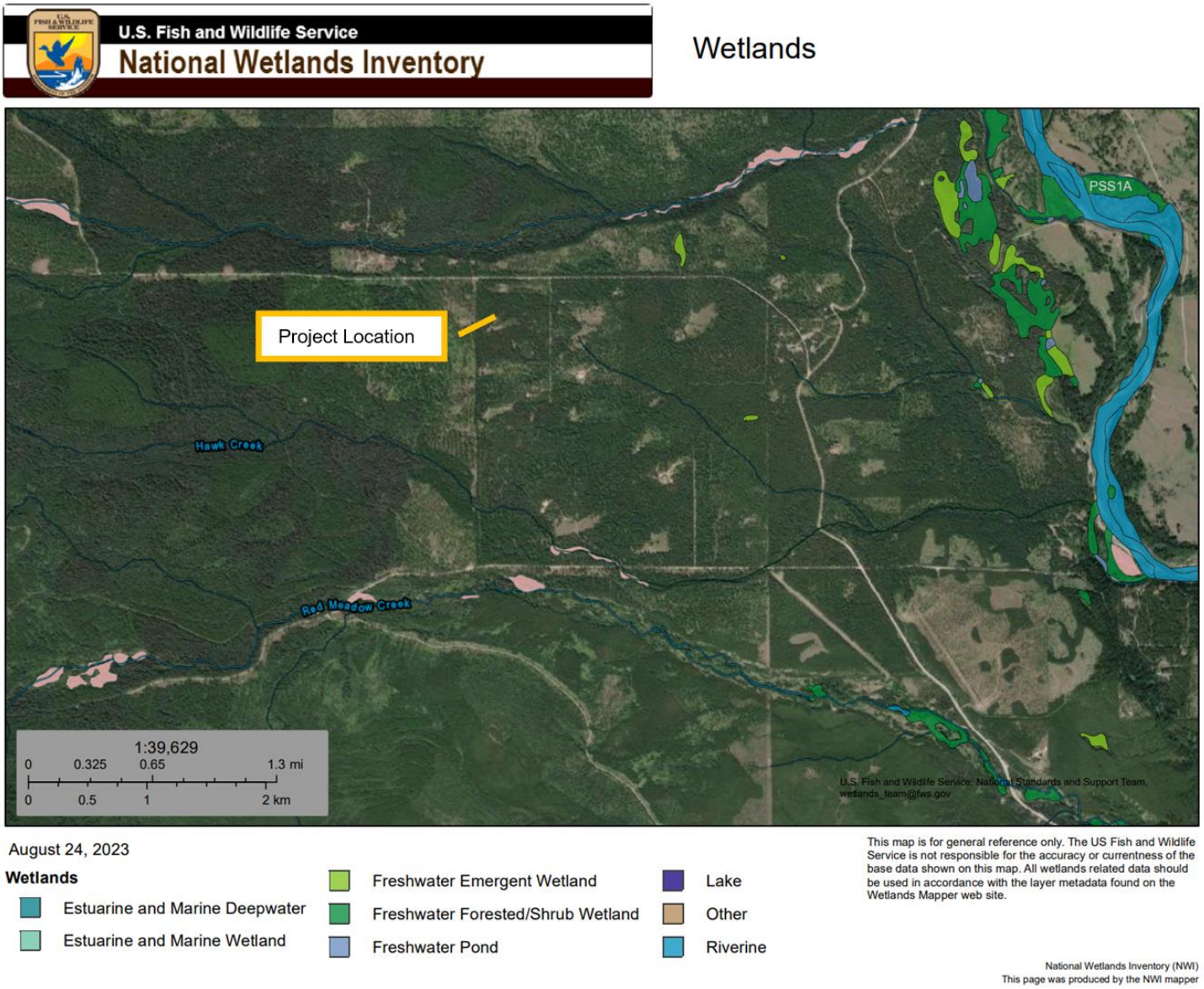

Figure 2. Map of wetland areas near the proposed project.

Determination: No significant impact.

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

Determination: N/A, project does not involve ponds.

GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE

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.*

It is not anticipated that the proposed domestic and lawn & garden uses will have a negative impact on the soil quality, stability, or moisture content. The soils can be described as andeptic cryoboralfs (sandy till morraines), consisting of well-drained silt loam, very gravelly sandy clay loam, and very gravelly sandy loam, formed from geologically recent glacial activity. These soils are classified under hydrologic soil Group B, having moderately low runoff potential and moderately high infiltration rates. This soil type contains a maximum of 35 percent calcium carbonate, indicating a low risk of saline seep.

Determination: No significant impact.

VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS –

Vegitation 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.*

It is not anticipated that issuance of a water use permit will significantly impact existing native vegetation or contribute to the establishment or spread of noxious weeds in the project area. Noxious weed prevention and control will be the responsibility of the landowner, who must follow all applicable noxious weed regulations.

Determination: No significant impact.

AIR QUALITY –

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

There will be no impact to air quality associated with the issuance of the proposed permit for beneficial use of groundwater.

Determination: No significant impact.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES –

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: N/A, project not located on State or Federal Lands.

DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY –

Environmental Resources of Land, Water, and Energy Demands - *Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water and energy not already addressed.*

All impacts to land, water, and energy have been identified and no further impacts are anticipated.

Determination: No significant impact.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS –

Locally Adopted Environmental Plans and Goals - *Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.*

This project is consistent with planned land uses.

Determination: No significant impact.

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES –

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.*

The groundwater well for this project is drilled on private property. The proposed project will not inhibit, alter, or impair access to present recreational opportunities in the area. The project is not expected to create any significant pollution, noise, or traffic congestion in the area that may alter the quality of recreational opportunities. The proposed place of use and diversion do not exist on land designated as wilderness.

Determination: No significant impact.

HUMAN HEALTH –

Human Health - *Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.*

No negative impact on human health is anticipated from this proposed use.

Determination: No significant impact.

PRIVATE PROPERTY –

Private Property - *Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights. If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.*

There are no government regulatory impacts on private property rights where this project is located.

Determination: No significant impact.

OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES –

Other Human Environmental Issues - *For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.*

1. Impacts on:

(a) *Cultural uniqueness and diversity?* None identified.

(*b*) *Local and state tax base and tax revenues?* None identified.

(c) *Existing land uses?* None identified.

(*d*) *Quantity and distribution of employment?* None identified.

(e) *Distribution and density of population and housing?* None identified.

(f) *Demands for government services?* None identified.

(g) *Industrial and commercial activity?* None identified.

(h) *Utilities?* None identified.

(i) *Transportation?* None identified.

(j) *Safety?* None identified.

(k) *Other appropriate social and economic circumstances?* None identified.

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:*

There are no mitigation/stipulation measures necessary for this project.

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 only alternative to the proposed action would be the no action alternative. The no action alternative would not authorize the diversion of groundwater at this location.

PART III. Conclusion

1. Preferred Alternative

The preferred alternative is to issue a water use permit if the Applicant proves the criteria in MCA §85.20.401 are met.

2 Comments and Responses

None.

3. *Finding:*

*Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? Yes___ No_**X**__*

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

No significant impacts related to the proposed project have been identified.

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

Name: Kristal Kiel

Title: Water Resource Specialist

Date: 15 September 2023