

**MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
Environmental Assessment**

Water Protection Bureau

Name of Project: Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (MPDES) permit MT0020338 renewal for the Town of Chester Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF).

Type of Project: The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) proposes to renew the MPDES permit for the Town of Chester WWTF discharge to Cottonwood Creek. The WWTF is a facultative three-celled lagoon with an average daily design flow of 0.168 million gallon per day (mgd).

Location of Project: 48.50078 N, 110.96181 W, Chester, MT, Liberty County

Agency Action and Applicable Regulations: The proposed action is to renew the MPDES permit for another five-year cycle.

- ARM Title 17, Chapter 30, Subchapter 2 - Water Quality Permit Application and Annual Fees.
- ARM Title 17, Chapter 30, Subchapter 5 - Mixing Zones in Surface and Ground Water.
- ARM Title 17, Chapter 30, Subchapter 6 - Surface Water Quality Standards.
- ARM Title 17, Chapter 30, Subchapter 7 - Nondegradation of Water Quality.
- ARM Title 17, Chapter 30, Subchapters 12 and 13 – MPDES Standards.
- Montana Water Quality Act, MCA 75-5-101, *et seq.*

Summary of Issues: Previous permit limitations continue to be in effect for the proposed permit cycle.

Benefits and Purpose of Action: The permit will ensure compliance with the Montana Water Quality Act and protection of the beneficial uses of Cottonwood Creek.

Affected Environment & Impacts of the Proposed Project:

Y = Impacts may occur (explain under Potential Impacts).

N = Not present or No Impact will likely occur.

IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
1. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are soils present which are fragile, erosive, susceptible to compaction, or unstable? Are there unusual or unstable geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations?	[N] This facility is long established and represents no new impacts.
2. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality?	[N] The permit contains effluent limits that will continue to assure discharge quality and protect receiving water beneficial uses.
3. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	[N] No new impacts present.

IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
4. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be significantly impacted? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	[N] Based on a search of the Natural Heritage Database, there are no vegetative species of concern in or within one mile of the site. In addition, this MPDES permitting action is the renewal of an existing wastewater discharge permit, with no anticipated impact on any species.
5. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	[N] Based on a search of the Natural Heritage Database, there are six avian species of concern in or within one mile of the site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baird's Sparrow • Brewer's Sparrow • Burrowing Owl • Chestnut-collared Longspur • Loggerhead Shrike • McCown's Longspur However, this MPDES permitting action is the renewal of an existing wastewater discharge permit, with no anticipated impact on these or other species.
6. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Species of special concern?	[N] See #5
7. SAGE GOUSE EXECUTIVE ORDER: Is the project proposed in core, general or connectivity sage grouse habitat, as designated by the Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program at https://sagegrouse.mt.gov/ ? If so, attach the documentation to the EA and address the Program's recommendation in the permit. If project is in core, general or connectivity habitat and the applicant did not document consultation with the Program, refer the applicant to the Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program.	[N] DEQ verified that this facility is not within core, general, or connectivity sage grouse habitat.
8. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	[N] No new impacts present.
9. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light?	[N] No new impacts present.
10. LAND USE: (waste disposal, agricultural lands [grazing, cropland, forest lands, prime farmland], recreational lands [waterways, parks, playgrounds, open space, federal lands), access, commercial and industrial facilities [production & activity, growth or decline], growth, land-use change, development activity)	[N] No new impacts present.
11. IMPACTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?	[N] No new impacts present.

IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT	
RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
12. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	[N] Effluent limits will protect public health. <i>Escherichia coli</i> is not considered a potential health risk due to minimal likelihood of human contact. The discharge location into an ephemeral waterbody is several miles from potential downstream human contact.
13. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	[N] No impacts are expected at this time.
14. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	[N] No impacts are expected at this time.
15. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	[N] No impacts are expected at this time.
16. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc.) be needed?	[N] No impacts are expected at this time.
17. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	[N] No impacts are expected at this time.
18. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?	[N] No impacts are expected at this time.
19. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	[N] No impacts are expected at this time.
20. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	[N] No impacts are expected at this time.
21. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	[N] No impacts are expected at this time.
22. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	[N] No impacts are expected at this time.
23(a). PRIVATE PROPERTY IMPACTS: Are we regulating the use of private property under a regulatory statute adopted pursuant to the police power of the state? (Property management, grants of financial assistance, and the exercise of the power of eminent domain are not within this category.) If not, no further analysis is required.	[N]
23(b). PRIVATE PROPERTY IMPACTS: Is the agency proposing to deny the application or condition the approval in a way that restricts the use of the regulated person's private property? If not, no further analysis is required.	[N]
23(c). PRIVATE PROPERTY IMPACTS: If the answer to 21(b) is affirmative, does the agency have legal discretion to impose or not impose the proposed restriction or discretion as to how the restriction will be imposed? If not, no further analysis is required. If so, the agency must determine if there are alternatives that would reduce, minimize or eliminate the restriction on the use of private property, and analyze such alternatives. The agency must disclose the potential costs of identified restrictions.	[N]

23. **Description of and Impacts of other Alternatives Considered:** None
24. **Summary of Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impact:** None
25. **Cumulative Effects:** None
26. **Preferred Action Alternative and Rationale:** The preferred action is to renew the MPDES permit because the MPDES program provides the regulatory mechanism for protecting water quality by enforcing the terms of the MPDES permit.

Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis:

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) More Detailed EA No Further Analysis

Rationale for Recommendation: An EIS is not required under the Montana Environmental Policy Act because the project lacks significant adverse effects to the human and/or physical environments.

27. **Public Involvement:** A 30-day public notification/comment period was held.
28. **Persons and agencies consulted in the preparation of this analysis:** Natural Heritage Program

EA Checklist Prepared By: Joanna McLaughlin, September 2017

Approved by:

Jon Kenning, Chief
Water Protection Bureau

Date