

**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**  
Environmental Assessment

**WATER QUALITY DIVISION**  
Water Protection Bureau

**Name of Project:** The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is modifying the Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (MPDES) permit for the City of Big Timber wastewater treatment facility (Big Timber WWTF).

**Type of Project:** DEQ proposes to modify the MPDES permit for the Big Timber WWTF that serves the City of Big Timber. The modification is made by DEQ pursuant to ARM 17.30.1361(2)(b) and modifies the effective date of the final effluent limitations for total recoverable copper and lead. All other aspects of the current permit are unchanged and remain in full force and effect.

**Location of Project:** 1600 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue

**City/Town:** Big Timber

**County:** Sweet Grass

**Description of Project:** MPDES permit modification.

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

ARM Title 17, Chapter 30, Sub-chapter 2 - Water Quality Permit Application and Annual Fees.  
ARM Title 17, Chapter 30, Sub-chapter 5 - Mixing Zones in Surface and Ground Water.  
ARM Title 17, Chapter 30, Sub-chapter 6 - Surface Water Quality Standards.  
ARM Title 17, Chapter 30, Sub-chapter 7 - Nondegradation of Water Quality.  
ARM Title 17, Chapter 30, Sub-chapter 12 and 13 - Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Standards.  
Montana Water Quality Act, MCA 75-5-101 et. seq.

**Summary of Issues:** The proposed modifications are made to incorporate changes to the 2009 *Boulder River Watershed Total Maximum Daily Load* that provide for staged implementation of the total recoverable copper and lead waste load allocations. The final effluent limitations for copper and lead are modified to take effect May 1, 2024. New special conditions are added to the permit requiring the permittee to conduct a copper and lead source assessment and control study. A new special condition to conduct a mixing zone study is also added.

**Benefits and Purpose of Action:** The permit will ensure compliance with the Montana Water Quality Act and protect beneficial uses of the Boulder River while allowing the City of Big Timber the necessary time to develop an appropriate strategy for complying with final metals limits that may require a significant financial commitment.

**Affected Environment & Impacts of the Proposed Project:**

Y = Impacts may occur (explain under Potential Impacts). *Include frequency, duration (long or short term), magnitude, and context for any significant impacts identified. Reference other permit analyses when appropriate (ex: statement of basis). Address significant impacts related to substantive issues and concerns. Identify reasonable feasible mitigation measures (before and after) where significant impacts cannot be avoided and note any irreversible or irretrievable impacts. Include background information on affected environment if necessary to discussion.*

N = Not present or No Impact will likely occur. *Use negative declarations where appropriate (wetlands, T&E, Cultural Resources).*

<b>IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT</b>	
<b>RESOURCE</b>	<b>[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES</b>
1. <b>GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:</b> 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] The facility is long established and no new impacts are expected to occur.
2. <b>WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:</b> 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 facility is long established and no new impacts are expected to occur.
3. <b>AIR QUALITY:</b> Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	[N] The facility is long established and no new impacts are expected to occur.
4. <b>VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:</b> Will vegetative communities be significantly impacted? Are any rare plants or cover types present?	[N] The facility is long established and no new impacts are expected to occur.
5. <b>TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:</b> Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish?	[N] The facility is long established and no new impacts are expected to occur.
6. <b>UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:</b> Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Species of special concern?	[N] The facility is long established and no new impacts are expected to occur.

**IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT**

<b>RESOURCE</b>	<b>[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES</b>
7. SAGE GROUSE EXECUTIVE ORDER: Is the project proposed in core, general or connectivity sage grouse habitat, as designated by the Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program (Program) at <a href="https://sagegrouse.mt.gov">https://sagegrouse.mt.gov</a> ? If yes, did the applicant attach documentation from the Program showing compliance with Executive Order 12-2015 and the Program's recommendations? If so, attach the documentation to the EA and address the Program's recommendations 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] The Department verified the facility is not located in core, general, or connectivity sage grouse habitat.
8. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	[N] The facility is long established and no new impacts are expected to occur.
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] The facility is long established and no new impacts are expected to occur.
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] The facility is long established and no new impacts are expected to occur.
11. IMPACTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?	[N]

**IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

<b>RESOURCE</b>	<b>[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES</b>
12. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	[N]
13. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	[N]
14. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.	[N]
15. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	[N]
16. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc.) be needed?	[N]

**IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT**

<b>RESOURCE</b>	<b>[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES</b>
17. <b>LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:</b> Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	[N]
18. <b>ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:</b> Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract?	[N]
19. <b>DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:</b> Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	[N]
20. <b>SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:</b> Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	[N]
21. <b>CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:</b> Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	[N]
22. <b>OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:</b>	[N]
23(a). <b>PRIVATE PROPERTY IMPACTS:</b> 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). <b>PRIVATE PROPERTY IMPACTS:</b> 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). <b>PRIVATE PROPERTY IMPACTS:</b> 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]

24. **Description of and Impacts of other Alternatives Considered:** None

25. **Summary of Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impact:** None

26. **Cumulative Effects:** None

27. **Preferred Action Alternative and Rationale:** The preferred action is to reissue the MPDES permit. This action is preferred because the permit program provides the regulatory mechanism for protecting water quality by enforcing the terms of the MPDES permit.
28. **Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis:**  
 EIS       More Detailed EA       No Further Analysis
29. **Rationale for Recommendation:** An EIS is not required under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) because the project lacks significant adverse effects to the human and physical environment. All of the anticipated effects to the physical and human environment will be mitigated or eliminated during project implementation.
30. **Public Involvement:** A 30-day public comment period will be held.
31. **Persons and agencies consulted in the preparation of this analysis:** None

**EA Checklist Prepared By:**

Jeff May  
Date: March 24, 2016

**Approved by:**

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Jon Kenning, Chief  
Water Protection Bureau

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Date