

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
Environmental Assessment

Water Quality Division
Water Protection Bureau

Name of Project: City of Fort Benton Wastewater Treatment Facility

Type of Project: Discharge of treated domestic wastewater into surface water under the Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (MPDES) permit program

Location of Project: 2610 Riverview Trail, Fort Benton, MT 59442

City/Town: Fort Benton

County: Chouteau

Description of Project: This Environmental Assessment (EA) is for a major modification of the permit for the City of Fort Benton Wastewater Treatment Facility. The proposed modification removes ground water monitoring and reduces receiving water and effluent monitoring requirements. All unchanged aspects of the current permit remain effective and in full force.

Agency Action and Applicable Regulations: The proposed action is to renew an individual MPDES permit that contains effluent limits and effluent monitoring requirements. The permit is issued under the authority of the Montana Water Quality Act (75-5-101 *et seq.*, MCA), Montana Surface Water Quality Standards and Procedures (ARM 17.30.601-670), Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (ARM 17.30.1201-1214 and ARM 17.30.1301-1387) and Montana Numeric Water Quality Standards in Circular DEQ-7 (October 2012).

Summary of Issues: The purpose of this action is to regulate the discharges of pollutants to state waters from the regulated facility. Issuance of an individual permit will require the applicant to implement, monitor, and manage practices to prevent pollution and the degradation of surface water.

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
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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] No significant impacts have been identified.
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] An alternate mixing zone for Total Ammonia only is authorized by DEQ. Surface water is Class B-3. DEQ developed numeric effluent limits such that, unless exceeded, water quality outside of the mixing zone (for Total Ammonia) or end-of-pipe (all other parameters) would be met. Monitoring and reporting of the effluent is required prior to discharge to ensure compliance with applicable standards and rules.
3. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)?	[N] No significant impacts have been identified.
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 is one vegetative species listed as S1 in the vicinity of the facility: the square-stem monkeyflower. This species has not been identified onsite.
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 three species listed as S1 or S2 in the vicinity of the facility: the pallid sturgeon, the sturgeon chub, the blue sucker, and the sauger. These species were identified upstream of the discharge from the facility but may be present downstream of the discharge from the facility. DEQ has developed water quality-based effluent limits for the facility protective of aquatic life.
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 #4 and #5 above. Site and habitat inventories for the applicable species were updated in 2013 in consultation with the Montana Natural Heritage Program. This is an existing facility. No major disturbances are proposed.

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<p>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 https://sagegrouse.mt.gov? 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.</p>	<p>[N] The Department verified the facility is not located in core, general, or connectivity sage grouse habitat.</p>
<p>7. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?</p>	<p>[N] This is an existing facility. No significant impacts have been identified. The Montana State Historic Preservation Office (MSHPO) recommends that in the event that cultural materials are inadvertently discovered the permittee should contact the MSHPO office for investigation.</p>
<p>8. 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?</p>	<p>[N] This is an existing facility. No significant impacts have been identified.</p>
<p>9. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR, OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project? Will new or upgraded power line or other energy source be needed?</p>	<p>[N] No significant impacts have been identified. A DEQ analysis indicates that the water quality standards will not be exceeded outside of the mixing zone or end-of-pipe for the parameters expected in the effluent. Monitoring and reporting requirements of the effluent ensures the identification of significant variations in the wastewater.</p>
<p>10. IMPACTS ON OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project?</p>	<p>[N] No significant impacts have been identified.</p>

IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

<p>11. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?</p>	<p>[N] No significant impacts have been identified.</p>
<p>12. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?</p>	<p>[N] No significant impacts have been identified.</p>
<p>13. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number.</p>	<p>[N] No significant impacts have been identified. This is an existing facility and the creation of new jobs is not expected.</p>
<p>14. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND</p>	

IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue?	[N] No significant impacts have been identified.
15. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc.) be needed?	[N] No significant impacts have been identified.
16. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	[N] No significant impacts have been identified.
17. 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 significant impacts have been identified.
18. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing?	[N] No significant impacts have been identified.
19. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	[N] No significant impacts have been identified.
20. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	[N] No significant impacts have been identified.
21. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:	[N] No significant impacts have been identified.
22(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] No significant impacts have been identified.
22(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] No significant impacts have been identified.

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22(c). PRIVATE PROPERTY IMPACTS: If the answer to 22(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] No significant impacts were identified in 22(b).

23. **Description of and Impacts of other Alternatives Considered:**

- A. No Action: Under the “No Action” alternative, DEQ would not issue an individual surface water discharge permit under the Montana Pollutant Discharge Elimination System administrative rules. The proposed action will have environmental benefits compared to leaving the facility unpermitted.
- B. Approval with modification: DEQ has not identified any necessary modifications to grant approval.

24. **Summary of Magnitude and Significance of Potential Impacts:**

Impacts were assessed with the assumption that the facility will comply with the terms and conditions of the permit. Violations of the permit could lead to significant adverse impacts to state waters. Violations of the permit are not an effect of the agency action since the permit itself forbids such activities. However, DEQ has taken steps to ensure that violations do not occur. The terms of the permit have been, if necessary, clarified and modified in response to comments from regulated parties, the public and other agencies. DEQ provides assistance to applicants in understanding and implementing the requirements of the permit. DEQ also conducts periodic inspections of permitted facilities, and identifies potential problems with design or management practices. If violations of the permit do occur, DEQ will take appropriate action under the water quality act (75-5-617, MCA). Enforcement sanctions for violations of the permit include injunctions, civil and administrative penalties, and cleanup orders.

25. **Cumulative Effects:** The issuance of this individual MPDES discharge permit would not have cumulative effects because the permit prohibits pollution and degradation of state waters.

26. **Preferred Action Alternative and Rationale:** The preferred action is to reissue the individual MPDES discharge permit. This action is preferred since the permit provides a regulatory mechanism for protecting water quality by applying effluent limits and monitoring requirements to the discharged wastewater.

Recommendation for Further Environmental Analysis:

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 physical environment.

27. Public Involvement: DEQ will hold a public comment period from July 18, 2016 through August 16, 2016.
28. Persons and agencies consulted in the preparation of this analysis:
Montana Natural Heritage Program
Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology web site
Montana Fish and Wildlife web site, animal species information web page
Natural Resource Information System, Montana State Library
Historical Preservation Society
United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Soil Survey

EA Checklist Prepared By:

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June 17, 20136

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Signature

Date