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As of: May 11, 2012 (3:45pm)

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**** Bill No. ****

Introduced By *****

By Request of the *****

A Bill for an Act entitled: "An Act generally revising ground water laws; defining the term "combined appropriation"; establishing controlled ground water areas; amending sections 85-2-102, 85-2-306, and 85-2-506, MCA; and providing effective dates."

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Montana:

Section 1. Section 85-2-102, MCA, is amended to read:

"85-2-102. Definitions. Unless the context requires otherwise, in this chapter, the following definitions apply:

(1) "Appropriate" means:

(a) to divert, impound, or withdraw, including by stock for stock water, a quantity of water for a beneficial use;

(b) in the case of a public agency, to reserve water in accordance with 85-2-316;

(c) in the case of the department of fish, wildlife, and parks, to change an appropriation right to instream flow to protect, maintain, or enhance streamflows to benefit the fishery resource in accordance with 85-2-436;

(d) in the case of the United States department of agriculture, forest service:

(i) instream flows and in situ use of water created in

Unofficial Draft Copy

As of: May 11, 2012 (3:45pm)

LC8000

85-20-1401, Article V; or

(ii) to change an appropriation right to divert or withdraw water under subsection (1)(a) to instream flow to protect, maintain, or enhance streamflows in accordance with 85-2-320;

(e) temporary changes or leases for instream flow to maintain or enhance instream flow to benefit the fishery resource in accordance with 85-2-408;

(f) a use of water for aquifer recharge or mitigation; or

(g) a use of water for an aquifer storage and recovery project as provided in 85-2-368.

(2) "Aquifer recharge" means either the controlled subsurface addition of water directly to the aquifer or controlled application of water to the ground surface for the purpose of replenishing the aquifer to offset adverse effects resulting from net depletion of surface water.

(3) "Aquifer storage and recovery project" means a project involving the use of an aquifer to temporarily store water through various means, including but not limited to injection, surface spreading and infiltration, drain fields, or another department-approved method. The stored water may be either pumped from the injection well or other wells for beneficial use or allowed to naturally drain away for a beneficial use.

(4) "Beneficial use", unless otherwise provided, means:

(a) a use of water for the benefit of the appropriator, other persons, or the public, including but not limited to agricultural, stock water, domestic, fish and wildlife, industrial, irrigation, mining, municipal, power, and

Unofficial Draft Copy

As of: May 11, 2012 (3:45pm)

LC8000

recreational uses;

(b) a use of water appropriated by the department for the state water leasing program under 85-2-141 and of water leased under a valid lease issued by the department under 85-2-141;

(c) a use of water by the department of fish, wildlife, and parks through a change in an appropriation right for instream flow to protect, maintain, or enhance streamflows to benefit the fishery resource authorized under 85-2-436;

(d) a use of water through a temporary change in appropriation right or lease to enhance instream flow to benefit the fishery resource in accordance with 85-2-408;

(e) a use of water for aquifer recharge or mitigation; or

(f) a use of water for an aquifer storage and recovery project as provided in 85-2-368.

(5) "Certificate" means a certificate of water right issued by the department.

(6) "Change in appropriation right" means a change in the place of diversion, the place of use, the purpose of use, or the place of storage.

(7) "Combined appropriation" means an appropriation of water from the same source by two or more wells or developed springs on a tract of record as defined by 76-3-103 in existence on [the effective date of this act] or created through subdivision after [the effective date of this act] for any beneficial use except stock water.

~~(7)~~(8) "Commission" means the fish, wildlife, and parks commission provided for in 2-15-3402.

Unofficial Draft Copy

As of: May 11, 2012 (3:45pm)

LC8000

~~(8)~~(9) "Correct and complete" means that the information required to be submitted conforms to the standard of substantial credible information and that all of the necessary parts of the form requiring the information have been filled in with the required information for the department to begin evaluating the information.

~~(9)~~(10) "Declaration" means the declaration of an existing right filed with the department under section 8, Chapter 452, Laws of 1973.

~~(10)~~(11) "Department" means the department of natural resources and conservation provided for in Title 2, chapter 15, part 33.

~~(11)~~(12) "Developed spring" means any artificial opening or excavation in the ground, however made, including any physical alteration at the point of discharge regardless of whether it results in any increase in the yield of ground water, from which ground water is sought or can be obtained or through which it flows under natural pressures or is artificially withdrawn.

~~(12)~~(13) "Existing right" or "existing water right" means a right to the use of water that would be protected under the law as it existed prior to July 1, 1973. The term includes federal non-Indian and Indian reserved water rights created under federal law and water rights created under state law.

~~(13)~~(14) "Ground water" means any water that is beneath the ground surface.

~~(14)~~(15) "Late claim" means a claim to an existing right forfeited pursuant to the conclusive presumption of abandonment

Unofficial Draft Copy

As of: May 11, 2012 (3:45pm)

LC8000

under 85-2-226.

~~(15)~~(16) "Mitigation" means the reallocation of surface water or ground water through a change in appropriation right or other means that does not result in surface water being introduced into an aquifer through aquifer recharge to offset adverse effects resulting from net depletion of surface water.

~~(16)~~(17) "Municipality" means an incorporated city or town organized and incorporated under Title 7, chapter 2.

~~(17)~~(18) "Permit" means the permit to appropriate issued by the department under 85-2-301 through 85-2-303 and 85-2-306 through 85-2-314.

~~(18)~~(19) "Person" means an individual, association, partnership, corporation, state agency, political subdivision, the United States or any agency of the United States, or any other entity.

~~(19)~~(20) (a) "Political subdivision" means any county, incorporated city or town, public corporation, or district created pursuant to state law or other public body of the state empowered to appropriate water.

(b) The term does not mean a private corporation, association, or group.

~~(20)~~(21) "Salvage" means to make water available for beneficial use from an existing valid appropriation through application of water-saving methods.

~~(21)~~(22) "State water reservation" means a water right created under state law after July 1, 1973, that reserves water for existing or future beneficial uses or that maintains a

Unofficial Draft Copy

As of: May 11, 2012 (3:45pm)

LC8000

minimum flow, level, or quality of water throughout the year or at periods or for defined lengths of time.

~~(22)~~(23) "Substantial credible information" means probable, believable facts sufficient to support a reasonable legal theory upon which the department should proceed with the action requested by the person providing the information.

~~(23)~~(24) "Waste" means the unreasonable loss of water through the design or negligent operation of an appropriation or water distribution facility or the application of water to anything but a beneficial use.

~~(24)~~(25) "Water" means all water of the state, surface and subsurface, regardless of its character or manner of occurrence, including but not limited to geothermal water, diffuse surface water, and sewage effluent.

~~(25)~~(26) "Water division" means a drainage basin as defined in 3-7-102.

~~(26)~~(27) "Water judge" means a judge as provided for in Title 3, chapter 7.

~~(27)~~(28) "Water master" means a master as provided for in Title 3, chapter 7.

~~(28)~~(29) "Watercourse" means any naturally occurring stream or river from which water is diverted for beneficial uses. It does not include ditches, culverts, or other constructed waterways.

~~(29)~~(30) "Well" means any artificial opening or excavation in the ground, however made, by which ground water is sought or can be obtained or through which it flows under natural pressures

or is artificially withdrawn."

{*Internal References to 85-2-102:*

75-5-410x 82-4-355x 85-2-141x 85-2-340x }

Section 2. Section 85-2-306, MCA, is amended to read:

"85-2-306. Exceptions to permit requirements. (1) (a)

Except as provided in subsection (1)(b), ground water may be appropriated only by a person who has a possessory interest in the property where the water is to be put to beneficial use and exclusive property rights in the ground water development works.

(b) If another person has rights in the ground water development works, water may be appropriated with the written consent of the person with those property rights or, if the ground water development works are on national forest system lands, with any prior written special use authorization required by federal law to occupy, use, or traverse national forest system lands for the purpose of diversion, impoundment, storage, transportation, withdrawal, use, or distribution of water under the certificate.

(c) If the person does not have a possessory interest in the real property from which the ground water may be appropriated, the person shall provide to the owner of the real property written notification of the works and the person's intent to appropriate ground water from the works. The written notification must be provided to the landowner at least 30 days prior to constructing any associated works or, if no new or expanded works are proposed, 30 days prior to appropriating the

Unofficial Draft Copy

As of: May 11, 2012 (3:45pm)

LC8000

water. The written notification under this subsection is a notice requirement only and does not create an easement in or over the real property where the ground water development works are located.

(2) Inside the boundaries of a controlled ground water area, ground water may be appropriated only:

(a) according to a permit received pursuant to 85-2-508; or

(b) according to the requirements of a rule promulgated pursuant to 85-2-506.

(3) (a) (i) Except as provided in subsection (3)(a)(ii), outside the boundaries of a controlled ground water area, a permit is not required before appropriating ground water by means of a well or developed spring:

(A) with a maximum appropriation of 35 gallons a minute or less, not to exceed 10 acre-feet a year, except that a combined appropriation ~~from the same source from two or more wells or developed springs~~ exceeding this limitation requires a permit; or

(B) when the appropriation is made by a local governmental fire agency organized under Title 7, chapter 33, and the appropriation is used only for emergency fire protection, which may include enclosed storage.

(ii) Outside the boundaries of a controlled ground water area, a permit is not required before appropriating ground water by means of a well or developed spring with a maximum appropriation of 350 gallons a minute or less for use in nonconsumptive geothermal heating or cooling exchange applications if all of the water extracted is returned without

Unofficial Draft Copy

As of: May 11, 2012 (3:45pm)

LC8000

delay to the same source aquifer and if the distance between the extraction well and both the nearest existing well and the hydraulically connected surface waters is more than twice the distance between the extraction well and the injection well.

(b) (i) Within 60 days of completion of the well or developed spring and appropriation of the ground water for beneficial use, the appropriator shall file a notice of completion with the department on a form provided by the department through its offices.

(ii) Upon receipt of the notice, the department shall review the notice and may, before issuing a certificate of water right, return a defective notice for correction or completion, together with the reasons for returning it. A notice does not lose priority of filing because of defects if the notice is corrected, completed, and refiled with the department within 30 days of notification of defects or within a further time as the department may allow, not to exceed 6 months.

(iii) If a notice is not corrected and completed within the time allowed, the priority date of appropriation is the date of refiling a correct and complete notice with the department.

(c) A certificate of water right may not be issued until a correct and complete notice has been filed with the department, including proof of landowner notification or a written federal special use authorization as necessary under subsection (1). The original of the certificate must be sent to the appropriator. The department shall keep a copy of the certificate in its office in Helena. The date of filing of the notice of completion is the

Unofficial Draft Copy

As of: May 11, 2012 (3:45pm)

LC8000

date of priority of the right.

(4) An appropriator of ground water by means of a well or developed spring first put to beneficial use between January 1, 1962, and July 1, 1973, who did not file a notice of completion, as required by laws in force prior to April 14, 1981, with the county clerk and recorder shall file a notice of completion, as provided in subsection (3), with the department to perfect the water right. The filing of a claim pursuant to 85-2-221 is sufficient notice of completion under this subsection. The priority date of the appropriation is the date of the filing of a notice, as provided in subsection (3), or the date of the filing of the claim of existing water right.

(5) An appropriation under subsection (4) is an existing right, and a permit is not required. However, the department shall acknowledge the receipt of a correct and complete filing of a notice of completion, except that for an appropriation of 35 gallons a minute or less, not to exceed 10 acre-feet a year, the department shall issue a certificate of water right. If a certificate is issued under this section, a certificate need not be issued under the adjudication proceedings provided for in 85-2-236.

(6) A permit is not required before constructing an impoundment or pit and appropriating water for use by livestock if:

(a) the maximum capacity of the impoundment or pit is less than 15 acre-feet;

(b) the appropriation is less than 30 acre-feet a year;

Unofficial Draft Copy

As of: May 11, 2012 (3:45pm)

LC8000

(c) the appropriation is from a source other than a perennial flowing stream; and

(d) the impoundment or pit is to be constructed on and will be accessible to a parcel of land that is owned or under the control of the applicant and that is 40 acres or larger.

(7) (a) Within 60 days after constructing an impoundment or pit, the appropriator shall apply for a permit as prescribed by this part. Subject to subsection (7)(b), upon receipt of a correct and complete application for a stock water provisional permit, the department shall automatically issue a provisional permit. If the department determines after a hearing that the rights of other appropriators have been or will be adversely affected, it may revoke the permit or require the permittee to modify the impoundment or pit and may then make the permit subject to terms, conditions, restrictions, or limitations that it considers necessary to protect the rights of other appropriators.

(b) If the impoundment or pit is on national forest system lands, an application is not correct and complete under this section until the applicant has submitted proof of any written special use authorization required by federal law to occupy, use, or traverse national forest system lands for the purpose of diversion, impoundment, storage, transportation, withdrawal, use, or distribution of water under the permit.

(8) A person may also appropriate water without applying for or prior to receiving a permit under rules adopted by the department under 85-2-113."

Unofficial Draft Copy

As of: May 11, 2012 (3:45pm)

LC8000

{ *Internal References to 85-2-306:*
85-2-102 x* 85-2-113x 85-2-236 x 85-2-302 x
85-2-322 x 85-2-330x 85-2-341 x 85-2-343 x
85-2-401 x 85-20-601x 85-20-901x 85-20-901x
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}

Section 3. Section 85-2-506, MCA, is amended to read:

"85-2-506. Controlled ground water areas -- designation or modification. (1) The department may by rule designate or modify permanent or temporary controlled ground water areas as provided in this part. The rule for each controlled ground water area must designate the boundaries of the controlled ground water area.

(2) The rulemaking process for designation or modification of a controlled ground water area may be initiated by:

(a) the department;

(b) submission of a correct and complete petition from a state or local public health agency for identified public health risks; or

(c) submission of a correct and complete petition:

(i) by a municipality, county, conservation district, or local water quality district formed under Title 7, chapter 13, part 45; or

(ii) signed by at least one-third of the water right holders in a proposed controlled ground water area.

(3) (a) A correct and complete petition must:

(i) be in a form prescribed by the department and must contain analysis prepared by a hydrogeologist, a qualified

scientist, or a qualified licensed professional engineer concluding that one or more of the criteria provided in subsection (5) are met; and

(ii) describe proposed measures, if any, to mitigate effects of the criteria identified in subsection (5) that are alleged in the petition.

(b) When the department proposes a rule pursuant to this section, the place for the hearing must be within or as close as practical to the proposed or existing controlled ground water area.

(c) (i) The department shall notify the petitioner of any defects in a petition within 180 days. If the department does not notify the petitioner of any defects within 180 days, the petition must be treated as correct and complete.

(ii) A petition that is not made correct and complete within 90 days from the date of notification by the department of any defect is terminated.

(4) (a) Within 60 days after a petition is determined to be correct and complete, the department shall:

(i) deny in writing the petition in whole or in part, stating the reasons for denial;

(ii) inform the petitioner that the department will study the information presented in the petition for a period not to exceed 90 days before denying or proceeding with the petition; or

(iii) initiate rulemaking proceedings in accordance with Title 2, chapter 4, part 3.

(b) Failure of the department to act under subsection

(4)(a) does not mandate that the department grant the petition for rulemaking.

(c) In addition to the notice requirements of Title 2, chapter 4, parts 1 through 4, the department shall provide public notice of the rulemaking hearing by:

(i) publishing a notice at least once each week for 3 successive weeks, with the first notice not less than 30 days before the date of the hearing in a newspaper of general circulation in the county or counties in which the proposed controlled ground water area is located;

(ii) serving by mail a copy of the notice, not less than 30 days before the hearing, upon each person or public agency known from an examination of the records of the department to be a water right holder with a diversion within the proposed controlled ground water area, all landowners of record within the proposed controlled ground water area, and each well driller licensed in Montana whose address is within any county in which any part of the proposed controlled ground water area is located; and

(iii) serving by mail a copy of the notice upon any other person or state or federal agency that the department feels may be interested in or affected by the proposed designation or modification of a controlled ground water area.

(d) The notice under subsection (4)(c) must include a summary of the basis for the proposed rule. Publication and mailing of the notice as prescribed in this section, when completed, is considered to be sufficient notice of the hearing

to all interested persons.

(5) ~~The~~ Except as provided in subsection (6), the department may designate a permanent controlled ground water area by rule if it finds by a preponderance of the evidence that any of the following criteria have been met and cannot be appropriately mitigated:

(a) current or projected reductions of recharge to the aquifer or aquifers in the proposed controlled ground water area will cause ground water levels to decline to the extent that water right holders cannot reasonably exercise their water rights;

(b) current or projected ground water withdrawals from the aquifer or aquifers in the proposed controlled ground water area have reduced or will reduce ground water levels or surface water availability necessary for water right holders to reasonably exercise their water rights;

(c) current or projected ground water withdrawals from the aquifer or aquifers in the proposed controlled ground water area have induced or altered or will induce or alter contaminant migration exceeding relevant water quality standards;

(d) current or projected ground water withdrawals from the aquifer or aquifers in the proposed controlled ground water area have impaired or will impair ground water quality necessary for water right holders to reasonably exercise their water rights based on relevant water quality standards;

(e) ground water within the proposed controlled ground water area is not suited for beneficial use; or

Unofficial Draft Copy

As of: May 11, 2012 (3:45pm)

LC8000

(f) public health, safety, or welfare is or will become at risk.

(6) (a) The department shall designate as controlled ground water areas specific watersheds within counties that:

(i) lie at least in part within basins closed pursuant to 85-2-319, 85-2-321, 85-2-330, 85-2-336, 85-2-341, 85-2-343, or 85-2-344;

(ii) had a population of at least 40,000 residents as reported by the most recent census; and

(iii) increased in population at least 10% from the census 10 years prior to the most recent census.

(b) For watersheds designated as controlled ground water areas pursuant to subsection (6)(a), the department shall adopt rules that allow for new appropriations provided that water right holders can reasonably exercise their water rights. The rules must include establishment of an exchange for mitigation water.

~~(6)~~(7) (a) If the department finds that sufficient facts are not available to designate a permanent controlled ground water area, it may designate by rule a temporary controlled ground water area to allow studies to obtain the facts needed to determine whether or not it is appropriate to designate a permanent controlled ground water area. The department shall set the length of time that the temporary controlled ground water area will be in effect. Subject to subsection ~~(6)(c)~~ (7)(c), the term of a temporary controlled ground water area may be extended by rule.

(b) A temporary controlled ground water area designation is

Unofficial Draft Copy

As of: May 11, 2012 (3:45pm)

LC8000

for the purpose of study and cannot include the control provisions provided in subsection ~~(7)~~(8), other than measurement, water quality testing, and reporting requirements.

(c) A temporary controlled ground water area designation may not exceed a total of 6 years, including any extensions.

(d) Prior to expiration of a temporary controlled ground water area, the department may amend or repeal the rule establishing the temporary controlled ground water area or may designate a permanent controlled ground water area through the rulemaking process under this section.

(e) Studies for temporary controlled ground water areas may be considered for funding under the renewable resource grant and loan program in Title 85, chapter 1, part 6.

(f) If there is a ground water investigation program within the bureau, the ground water assessment steering committee established by 2-15-1523 shall consider temporary controlled ground water areas for study.

~~(7)~~(8) A controlled ground water area may include but is not limited to the following control provisions:

(a) a provision closing the controlled ground water area to further appropriation of ground water;

(b) a provision restricting the development of future ground water appropriations in the controlled ground water area by flow, volume, purpose, aquifer, depth, water temperature, water quality, density, or other criteria that the department determines necessary;

(c) a provision requiring measurement of future ground

Unofficial Draft Copy

As of: May 11, 2012 (3:45pm)

LC8000

water or surface water appropriations;

(d) a provision requiring the filing of notice on land records within the boundary of a permanent controlled ground water area to inform prospective holders of an interest in the property of the existence of a permanent controlled ground water area. Notice of the designation must be removed or modified as necessary to accurately reflect modification or repeal of a permanent designation within 60 days.

(e) a provision for well spacing requirements, well construction constraints, and prior department approval before well drilling, unless the well is regulated pursuant to Title 82, chapter 11;

(f) a provision for mitigation of ground water withdrawals;

(g) a provision for water quality testing;

(h) a provision for data reporting to the department; and

(i) other control provisions that the department determines are appropriate and adopts through rulemaking."

{*Internal References to 85-2-506:*

85-2-306 x	85-2-508 x	85-2-523x	85-2-524x
85-2-524 x	85-20-1001x	85-20-100x	85-20-1001x }

NEW SECTION. Section 4. {standard} Effective dates. (1)

Except as provided in subsection (2), [this act] is effective on passage and approval.

(2) [Section 3] is effective October 1, 2013.

- END -

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As of: May 11, 2012 (3:45pm)

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