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## WATER AVAILABILITY BODES WELL FOR MONTANA FAMILIES

Helena, MT, April 12, 2016—Nicklin Earth & Water, Inc., have assembled a water resource evaluation of water supply and availability, focusing on four high growth areas where demand on groundwater, particularly by small exempt wells is high: Ravalli County (Bitterroot Watershed), Missoula County (Upper and Middle Clark Fork Basins), Lewis and Clark County (Upper Missouri River Basin), and the Gallatin Valley.

The purpose of the comprehensive study was to collect and analyze data on overall water consumption (both surface and groundwater supplies) and the impacts of various water uses, particularly so-called exempt wells on streamflows and other water uses. The study revealed no evidence that that the overall consumptive water use has increased with the growth of subdivisions and their accompanying use of groundwater. Statistically, total domestic consumption accounts for an average of .46 percent of water utilization across Montana, with individual domestic wells making up only a small percentage of that consumption. The study further concluded that there is no measurable evidence of so-called “cumulative impacts” of individual domestic wells, public water supply wells, or even agricultural irrigation wells on streamflows at the watershed scale. Any net cumulative effect is simply too small to be discerned or to prevent continued appropriation of existing water uses.

Looking forward, the water evaluation suggests that in those instances when water supply is stressed or limited due to drought or seasonable availability, water management utilizing water storage options can effectively avoid impacts. The Montana Legislature’s Water Policy Interim Committee is currently considering options for storage infrastructure development, an excellent investment in Montana’s economic and natural resources future.

At present, a decision from the First Judicial District Court in Lewis & Clark County severely restricts well use for development purposes, putting a significant damper on new residential growth and development.

Taylor Oldroyd, Montana Association of REALTORS® CEO explains the Association's stance:

"MAR is seeking a return to public policy that freely and transparently grants exempt well permits, so we can get back to growing our best resource: Montana families."

The Montana Supreme Court will hear oral arguments before the Court in the Clark Fork Coalition vs DNRC case on May 18, more information to follow.

*The Montana Association of REALTORS® is the voice for real estate in Montana. They are a state-wide trade association representing more than 4,000 members involved in all aspects of the residential and commercial real estate markets throughout Montana. The Montana Association of REALTORS® is the business and public policy advocate for its members and the consumers they serve.*

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