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Contact: Casey Lewis, Executive Director  
Western Montana Conservation Commission  
MT Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation  
[Casey.Lewis@mt.gov](mailto:Casey.Lewis@mt.gov)  
406.241.7475

### **Western Montana Conservation Commission Secures \$7 Million in EPA Grant Funding to Safeguard Columbia River Basin Headwaters**

HELENA, Mont. – The Western Montana Conservation Commission (WMCC) is proud to announce a groundbreaking initiative aimed at mitigating toxic pollution in the headwaters of the Columbia River Basin. Bolstered by a \$7 million grant through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, WMCC is poised to make a lasting impact on the ecological health of the region.

With a focus on pollution elimination, water quality improvement, runoff reduction, and citizen engagement, WMCC's multifaceted approach includes the implementation of stormwater and septic leachate toxic reduction subaward programs, coupled with extensive education and outreach endeavors. These initiatives are strategically designed to empower communities, enhance local knowledge, and involve citizens in safeguarding their water resources.

"At a time when Montana is experiencing rapid development, it is imperative to proactively address stormwater and septic leachate pollution to safeguard the pristine water resources that are integral to Montana's ecology, recreational activities, economy, and culture," emphasized Casey Lewis, Executive Director of the Western Montana Conservation Commission.

The initiative has secured a total award of \$9,330,767, comprising a federal amount of \$6,998,075 and a matching contribution of \$2,332,692.

"EPA grants are helping local partners develop local solutions for pressing water quality challenges across the Columbia River Basin," said EPA Regional Administrator KC Becker. "This WMCC initiative will reduce contaminated runoff and septic pollution as Western Montana continues to develop and grow, with a focus on direct engagement with Tribal, rural and disadvantaged communities."

This significant financial support enables WMCC to not only address toxic pollution but also build the capacity of local governments, agencies, and watershed groups to tackle pressing nonpoint source pollution challenges. WMCC will allocate funding to projects in communities, specifically focusing on Tribal, rural, and low-income areas.

"This funding empowers us to engage with communities, understand their unique needs, and provide them with the tools to address toxic pollution, thereby improving the health of their surroundings," added Lewis.

The WMCC envisions this initiative as a timely response to the challenges posed by rapid development, aiming to bolster the resilience of Montana's communities and empower them to actively participate in the conservation of the state's water resources.

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**About Western Montana Conservation Commission:** The Western Montana Conservation Commission is dedicated to the preservation and sustainable management of the region's natural resources. With a commitment to community engagement, education, and proactive environmental stewardship, WMCC works towards ensuring the longevity and vitality of Montana's ecosystems.