



WESTERN MONTANA
**Conservation
Commission**

Western Montana Conservation Commission Meeting Packet

May 20-21, 2026
Hamilton, MT

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*Action item



Wednesday, May 20 | 12:00 PM to 4:30 PM

LOCATION: Bitterroot River Inn & Conference Center
139 Bitterroot Plaza Dr, Hamilton, MT 59840

For virtual attendees: [Zoom Registration](#)

11:15 AM	Lunch (provided) Retirement Celebration: Julie Spencer
12:00 PM	Call to Order & Roll Call Overview of agenda
12:15 PM	Tribal Welcome
12:20 PM	Conflict of Interest Lieutenant Governor Kristen Juras
12:50 PM	Commission Business, Finances, & Updates Action: Vote on January 2026 Meeting Minutes Action: Vote on Budget Amendments (if needed), FY27 Budget
1:20 PM	Western Montana Funding for Water & Wastewater Steve Howke, District Director for Rep. Zinke Matt Zacharias, Field Representative & Veteran Liaison for Rep. Zinke Commissioner Jeff Burrows, Ravalli County
1:55 PM	Break
2:10 PM	Commission Member Spotlight Ron Pifer, Environmental Solutions
2:25 PM	Public Comment
2:35 PM	Adjourn
2:45 PM	Field Trip: Skalkaho Bend Park Alex Ocañas, Bitterroot Water Partnership Damon Tucker, Bitterroot Water Partnership
5:00 PM	Social Hour



Thursday, May 21 | 9:00 AM to 12:45 PM

For virtual attendees: [Zoom Registration](#)

9:00 AM	Call to Order & Roll Call Overview of agenda
9:30 AM	WMCC Program Updates
10:30 AM	Break
10:45 AM	DEQ Nonpoint Source & Wetlands Updates: Project Funding & Volunteer Monitoring Ella Lunny, DEQ NPSW Section WQ Specialist
11:35 AM	Committee Updates
12:30 PM	Public Comment
12:45 PM	Wrap-up & Adjourn <i>Join us for lunch (provided) & agency updates roundtable</i>



Monday, May 11, 2026

TO: Western Montana Conservation Commission Members
FROM: Stephanie Murphy, WMCC Communications Coordinator
SUBJECT: January 2026 WMCC Meeting Minutes

ACTION ITEM:

INFORMATIONAL ITEM:

Summary:

Meeting minutes were recorded for the Western Montana Conservation Commission's January 2026 meeting and require review and approval.

Requested Action:

Vote to approve the January 2026 Meeting Minutes.

Suggested Motion:

Move to approve the January 2026 Meeting Minutes.

Staff Contact:

Stephanie Murphy, Communications Coordinator – stephanie.murphy@mt.gov

Western Montana Conservation Commission (WMCC) Meeting Minutes

Fairmont Hot Springs – Anaconda, MT

Virtual option on Zoom

Minutes prepared by Stephanie Murphy

Acronyms

- AIS Aquatic Invasive Species
- BPA Bonneville Power Administration
- BSWC Big Sky Watershed Corps
- CBSM Community-Based Social Marketing
- CD Conservation District
- CFC Clark Fork Coalition
- CSKT Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
- DEQ MT Department of Environmental Quality
- EPA US Environmental Protection Agency
- FLBS Flathead Lake Biological Station
- FWP MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- GSI Green Stormwater Infrastructure
- IJC International Joint Commission
- MACD Montana Association of Conservation Districts
- NRDP Natural Resource Damage Program
- QAPP Quality Assurance Project Plan
- TMDL Total Maximum Daily Loads
- WET Water & Environmental Technologies
- WLI Whitefish Lake Institute
- WMCC Western Montana Conservation Commission

DAY ONE:

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2025 | 11:15 AM – 4:30 PM

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Call to Order

Mike Koopal, Chair & WLI

1. Overview of agenda.
2. Overview of voting commission member terms: Mike Koopal welcomed new members, Bill Yankee and Sen. Mark Noland.
3. Overview of meeting structure and rules.

Attendance

WMCC (voting members underlined): Mike Koopal, Onno Wieringa, Lech Naumovich, Rich Janssen, Duane Braaten, Sandy Beder-Miller, Randy Brodehl, Caroline McDonald, Noel Duram, Bill Yankee, Julie Spencer, Matt Peterson, Phil Matson, Rep. Neil Duram, Tom Woolf, Sara Edinberg, Peter Brumm, Kate Wilson, Casey Lewis, Michelle Barton, Stephanie Murphy, Heidi Fleur, Krista Lammers, Olivia Galluzzo, Mark Bostrom

Virtual WMCC: Ron Pifer, Galen Steffans, Michelle Cox, Jim Elser, Kristen Jordan

Absent members: Arthur Potts, Tracy Campbell, Sen. Janet Ellis, Rep. Tom France, Jim Ferch, Tom Martin, Lindsey Krywaruchka, Martin Charlo, Greg Hoffman, Melissa Schaar, Emilie Henry

Partners & guests: Gretchen Watkins, Autumn Coleman, Eric Trum, Liz Lodman, Samantha Tappenbeck, Daisy Coyne

Virtual partners & guests: Sheena Pate, Mariah Durglo, Will Meyer, Tiffany Lyden, Matt Elsaesser, Kelly Hendrix, Hannah Reidl, Maggie Winter-Sydnor, Meagan Gilmore, Troy Hill, Constanza von der Pahlen, Coby Gierke, Mark Ockey, Marie Nelson, Margarite Juarez Thomas, Janelle Groff, Russ Hartzell, Rachel Malison, Noah Matheny, Asta Bowen

Quorum established

Tribal Welcome

Rich Janssen, CSKT

1. Rich Janssen welcomed meeting attendees to Fairmont Hot Springs, the healing waters for tribes. Janssen, a Qlispé member celebrating 56th year as a native Montana resident, noted working with WMCC has been wonderful experience.

AGENDA

Commission Business, Finances, & Updates

Mike Koopal, Chair & WLI

Casey Lewis, Executive Director

1. Mike Koopal called for comments on the September 2025 Meeting Minutes.
 - a. **Motion** was made by Onno Wieringa to approve the September 2025 Meeting Minutes; **seconded** by Sandy Beder-Miller
 - b. **Motion passed** unanimously by a vote of 13-0.
2. Casey Lewis introduced WMCC's new Program Coordinator, Michelle Barton, and WMCC's new Big Sky Watershed Corps (BSWC) member, Olivia Galluzzo.
 - a. Michelle and Olivia introduced their backgrounds and interests.
3. Casey Lewis presented the proposed By-Laws Amendment to clarify chair's voting process: the chair retains their vote as a voting member, but should only vote when their vote will change the outcome.
 - a. **Motion** by Onno Wieringa to approve the by-laws amendment as proposed in Part V, Section 3; **seconded** by Noel Duram
 - b. **Motion passed** unanimously by a vote of 13-0.
4. Casey Lewis presented the proposed amendment to the Commission Decision Points: 1) adding clarification on decision points for public comment and 2) align approval limits for grants awarded by WMCC with State Procurement Bureau regulation and DNRC guidelines.
 - a. Mike Koopal noted that this proposal has been reviewed and is recommended by the Executive Committee.
 - b. **Motion** by Onno Wieringa to approve amendment to commission decision points; **seconded** by Phil Matson
 - c. **Motion passed** unanimously by a vote of 13-0.

5. Casey Lewis provided an overview of WMCC's operational budget, grant funding, and expenditures to date.

Central Clark Fork Watershed Restoration Plan Update

Gretchen Watkins, CFC

1. Gretchen Watkins presented an overview of the Clark Fork Coalition's work on developing the Central Clark Fork Watershed Restoration Plan. Gretchen provided context about the Clean Water Act and Montana DEQ's role in cataloging impaired waters. Gretchen introduced key priorities of the watershed restoration plan and next steps to gather community feedback and assess restoration sites.
 - a. This project was funded, in part, by WMCC at \$7,500.

Committee Updates & Annual Review

Mike Koopal, Chair & WLI

Phil Matson, FLBS

Caroline McDonald, Lake County CD

Lech Naumovich, Greater Than Image, LLC

Kate Wilson, BPA

Matt Peterson, NewFields

1. Mike Koopal provided updates from the Executive Committee including recent review of project support requests, competitive grants, and meeting agenda items.
2. Phil Matson, Chair of AIS Committee, presented the priorities of the Committee in the last year and the outcomes of the annual review.
 - a. **Motion** by Noel Durham to have Phil Matson and Tom Woolf Co-Chair the AIS Committee; **seconded** by Caroline McDonald.
 - b. **Motion passed** unanimously by a vote of 12-0 with Phil Matson recused from the vote.
3. Caroline McDonald, Co-Chair of the On-site Wastewater Treatment Committee (OSWTC), provided an overview of committee goals and projects, and shared the success of their 2025 in-person planning meeting.
 - a. **Motion** by Julie Spencer to have Caroline McDonald and Nanette Nelson continue as Co-Chairs for the OSWTC to keep co-chairs; **seconded** by Matt Peterson.
 - b. **Motion passed** unanimously by a vote of 12-0 with Caroline McDonald recused from the vote.
4. Lech Naumovich, Chair of the Monitoring & Coordination Committee, provided an overview of the committee's activities in the last year and encouraged attendees to complete the Western Montana Aquatic Monitoring Landscape Survey.
 - a. Motion by Phil Matson to have Lech Naumovich continue as Chair for the Monitoring & Coordination Committee; **seconded** by Sandy Beder-Miller.
 - b. **Motion passed** unanimously by a vote of 12-0 with Lech Naumovich recused from the vote.
5. Kate Wilson, Chair of the Education, Outreach and Communications (EOC) Committee, highlighted some gaps in membership identified during the annual review process and provided an overview of the committee's activities in the last year.
 - a. Motion by Caroline McDonald to have Kate Wilson continue as Chair for the EOC Committee; **seconded** by Phil Matson.

- b. **Motion passed** unanimously by a vote of 13-0.
6. Matt Peterson, Co-Chair of the Stormwater Advisory Council, provided an update on the Stormwater Advisory Council's progress with the WaterNow Alliance and presented next steps for the Council.

Break

Commission Member Spotlight

Mike Koopal, Chair & WLI

1. Mike Koopal presented an overview of his life and career from Iowa to Montana. He shared information about his family, education, career path, and starting the Whitefish Lake Institute.

WMCC In Review

Casey Lewis, Executive Director

1. Casey Lewis introduced this facilitated review session with a reminder about WMCC's Sunset Date. The facilitated review was intended to gather feedback, evaluate effectiveness, and provide future direction for WMCC.

Public Comment

Mike Koopal, Chair & WLI

1. Mike Koopal called for public comment.
2. Seeing no comments, Mike Koopal closed public comment.

Adjourn

Mike Koopal, Chair & WLI

1. **Motion** was made by Onno Wieringa to adjourn; **seconded** by Phil Matson.
2. **Motion** passed unanimously by a vote of 13-0; meeting adjourned.

DAY TWO:

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2025 | 9:15 AM – 1:00 PM

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Call to Order

Mike Koopal, Chair & WLI

1. Mike Koopal called the meeting to order.
2. Mike Koopal presented an overview of the agenda, meeting structure and voting member terms.
3. Introduction of new members: Bill Yankee and Sen. Mark Noland

Attendance

WMCC (voting members underlined): Mike Koopal, Onno Weiringa, Lech Naumovich, Rich Janssen, Duane Braaten, Sandy Beder-Miller, Randy Brodehl, Caroline McDonald, Noel Duram, Bill Yankee, Julie Spencer, Matt Peterson, Phil Matson, Sen. Mark Noland, Rep. Neil Duram, Lindsey Krywaruchka, Tom Woolf, Sara Edinberg, Peter Brumm

Virtual WMCC: Ron Pifer, Tracy Campbell, Cory Sandow, Jim Elser, Galen Steffens

Absent members: Arthur Potts, Sen. Janet Ellis, Rep. Tom France, Jim Ferch, Tom Martin, Martin Charlo, Michelle Cox, Kate Wilson, Melissa Schaar, Emilie Henry, Kristen Jordan

Partners & guests: Trevor Selch, Autumn Coleman, Eric Trum, Samantha Tappenbeck, Daisy Coyne

Virtual partners & guests: Tom Bansak, Mariah Durglo, Will Meyer, Tiffany Lyden, Kelly Hendrix, Hannah Reidl, Maggie Winter-Sydnor, Meagan Gilmore, Troy Hill, Constanza von der Pahlen, Coby Gierke, Margarite Juarez Thomas, Janelle Groff, Russ Hartzell, Rachel Malison, Marilyn Roberts, Tom Bansak, Sara Ricklefs, Asta Bowen, Mayre Flowers, Andy Ulven, Stephanie Ayotte, Torie Haraldson, Matt Elsaesser, Michelle Pond, Erik Englebert, Tatiana Davila

Members of the Press: Hailey Smalley (virtual)

Quorum established

AGENDA

International Elk-Kootenai/y Watershed Study Board

Tom Bansak, FLBS

1. Tom Bansak, appointed expert on the IJC Study Board and US Co-Chair, provided an update on the study board activities including an Interim Report submitted in September 2025 and working toward submitting the Final Report in September 2026. Tom shared public engagement opportunities through 2026.

WMCC Program Updates

Krista Lammers, Grant Admin. Specialist
Shane Ellingson, WET

Christina Eggensperger, WET
Holly Bjerke, Lincoln Elementary School

1. Krista Lammers introduced a proposed Showcase GSI project under WMCC's Stormwater and Septic Leachate Toxics Reduction Grant Program: the Anaconda: Lincoln Elementary Project.
2. Shane Ellingson presented an overview of the proposed project including current stormwater challenges and the proposed conceptual design to mitigate stormwater runoff and minimize flooding while providing green space and educational opportunities.
3. Christina Eggensperger aligned the goals of WMCC with the proposed project.
4. Holly Bjerke outlined the educational opportunities and community member support for the project.

- a. **Motion** was made by Noel Duram to approve grant award as proposed; **seconded** by Onno Wieringa.
- b. **After discussion, a substitute motion** was made by Randy Brodehl to approve the funding of the proposed project and require grantees to include additions to the project as discussed; **seconded** by Onno Wieringa.
- c. **Motion** passed unanimously with a vote of 14-0.

Break

Montana Aquatic Invasive Species Updates

Tom Woolf, MT FWP

1. Tom Woolf provided an overview of the 2025 inspections, outreach and detections of aquatic invasive species in Montana. Tom provided information on the Boater Information Gathering (BIG) Project, updates to AIS marketing materials from FWP Communications & Education Division, and detections in other western states, such as the golden mussels in California. Tom highlighted the importance of regional AIS coordination across the west and in Montana.

Qualifying Toxins to Inform Fish Consumption & Identifying Sources of Pollutants in the Upper Columbia River Basin of Montana

Trevor Selch, MT FWP

1. Trevor Selch provided information about this EPA-funded collaborative project with MT Trout Unlimited, MT FWP, MT DEQ, Clark Fork Coalition, NRDP, CKST, and Missoula County to quantify toxins and identify sources of pollutants in the Upper Columbia River Basin. Trevor outlined the toxic compound results from passive sampling across the Clark Fork, and issues with fish tissue analysis that are currently being remedied.

WMCC Program Updates *continued*

Stephanie Murphy, Communications Coordinator
Heidi Fleury, Grant Program Specialist

Krista Lammers, Grant Admin. Specialist
Olivia Galluzzo, BSWC

1. Stephanie Murphy shared that the showcase GSI awards press release was picked up in multiple news stories.
2. Heidi Fleury provided an overview of WMCC's Stormwater & Septic Leachate Toxics Reduction Grant Program including the launch of competitive grant contracts and projects starting this spring, as well as the remaining available funds. Heidi provided information about the QAPPs that are approved by the EPA and QAPPs that are still being developed.
3. Krista Lammers reported on the direct contracted services and awards including the Flathead Septage Facility, partnership with MACD, the CBSM research and marketing RFP, and the Stormwater Advisory Council.

4. Olivia Galluzzo introduced the program plans for her 2026 BSWC term including supporting the Montana Waters: Clearly Connected campaign, engagement with grantees, AIS industry outreach, and other education and outreach efforts.
5. Stephanie Murphy presented information about WMCC's partnerships, collaborative efforts and project support since the September 2025 meeting, upcoming events, required efforts for 508 compliance, and status of AIS grant applications.

DEQ's Narrative Nutrient Water Quality Standards

Lindsey Krywaruchka, MT DEQ

Andy Ulven, MT DEQ

1. Lindsey Krywaruchka provided background information about legislation for Montana's Nutrient Standards with the passage of HB 664.
2. Andy Ulven provided a brief history of surface water nutrient standards in Montana and explained where numeric nutrient criteria had applied and did not apply. Andy further outlined the process of determining numeric criteria and thresholds under narrative standards, public notice and comment periods, permitting, and revising TMDLs with EPA approval.

Public Comment

Mike Koopal, Chair & WLI

1. Mike Koopal called for public comment.
 - a. Onno Wieringa emphasized the role of Commission Members to learn and share with the people of Montana. Onno encouraged connecting with legislators about the good work of WMCC. Onno expressed excitement for the Anaconda Lincoln Elementary School GSI project and the work WMCC has done to get projects and funding on-the-ground.
 - b. Phil Matson highlighted Montana FWP's robust AIS program and their Best of the West award. Phil appreciated the data collected from the BIG project, and the collaborative efforts of Flathead Conservation District, which will be great to share during the next legislative session.
2. Seeing no further comments, Mike Koopal closed public comment.

Adjourn

Mike Koopal, Chair & WLI

1. Next WMCC Meeting will be on May 20-21, 2026 in Hamilton, MT.
2. **Motion** to adjourn Onno Wieringa; **seconded** by Rich Janssen
3. **Motion passed** unanimously by a vote of 14-0; meeting adjourned.



Monday, May 11, 2026

TO: Western Montana Conservation Commission Members
FROM: Casey Lewis, WMCC Executive Director
SUBJECT: Western Montana Conservation Commission Conflict of Interest Policy

ACTION ITEM:

INFORMATIONAL ITEM:

Summary:

An updated Conflict of Interest Policy has been developed for the Western Montana Conservation Commission.

The Western Montana Conservation Commission (WMCC) meeting will host Lieutenant Governor Kristen Juras on May 20, 2026, from 12:20 to 12:50 PM to discuss conflict of interest considerations for members. The Lieutenant Governor will provide practical guidance on how conflict of interest applies as a commission member, how to navigate potential conflicts appropriately, and other key items to be aware of, as well as time for questions.

Members will review and sign the updated conflict of interest policy acknowledgement at the meeting.

Requested Action:

Review the following conflict of interest policy.

Western Montana Conservation Commission

Conflict of Interest Policy

Article I - Purpose

Notwithstanding the ethical provisions set forth in Montana Code Annotated Title 2, Chapter 2, Standards of Conduct, this policy is intended to safeguard the interests of the Western Montana Conservation Commission by: (a) ensuring that the personal interests of Commission Members do not impede their commitment to fulfilling their duties to the Commission; and (b) preventing individuals from obtaining any personal financial, professional, or political gain arising from their role with the Commission. This policy does not replace any applicable federal, state, or local laws regarding conflicts of interest. This policy supplements applicable federal or state law.

Article II – Persons Concerned

This Policy applies to all Commission Members of the Western Montana Conservation Commission. This encompasses all individuals involved in financial decision-making, as well as those with access to proprietary or confidential information concerning the Western Montana Conservation Commission.

Article III – Definitions

For purposes of this Policy:

1. **Conflict of Interest** means a situation in which an individual has a direct or indirect personal, financial, professional, or political interest in a decision, contract, or other matter involving the Commission that could reasonably be perceived to interfere with the individual's impartial discharge of their duties, including interests held by a Family Member.
2. **Interested Person** means any Commission Member who has, or may have, a Conflict of Interest.
3. **Financial Interest** means any direct or indirect ownership or investment interest, compensation arrangement, or other tangible personal benefit that may be affected by a decision, contract, or other action of the Commission, including interests held through a Family Member or through another entity.
4. **Family Member** means a spouse, domestic partner, parent, child, sibling, or any person residing in the same household as the individual.

Article IV – Disclosure Policy and Procedures

1. Duty to Disclose

Every Member is obligated to promptly disclose the presence or potential existence of a Conflict of Interest as soon as it arises or becomes known to them.

2. Addressing a Conflict of Interest

Any Member may recuse themselves at any time from participating in any decision or discussion in which they believe they have or may have a Conflict of Interest. This can be

done without undergoing the formal process for determining the existence of a Conflict of Interest.

In the event of a third-party notice of a potential Conflict of Interest violation, notice shall be directed to the Executive Director. In cases where the Executive Director is the individual with the conflict, the disclosure will be made to the Division Administrator.

Following notice of a potential Conflict of Interest violation, all material facts will be requested and examined, including engaging in a discussion with the Interested Person.

If the Division Administrator concludes that a Conflict of Interest exists, they will undertake necessary actions to address the conflict. This may involve, but is not limited to, prohibiting any Interested Persons from voting on any matter related to said Conflict of Interest.

The minutes of applicable meetings shall document the notice of the Conflict of Interest and the recusal.

3. Notice of Statements

At the commencement of a term of office with the Western Montana Conservation Commission, every Member must sign an Acknowledgment of the Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure Policy.

Article V - Acknowledgement

By signing, the below-named person acknowledges an understanding of what constitutes a Conflict of Interest. Furthermore, they acknowledge an understanding of the procedures required for addressing such conflicts with the Western Montana Conservation Commission, including their obligation to disclose any known or potential conflicts of interest and recuse themselves from participating in any decision or discussion relating to the Conflict of Interest.

The undersigned agrees to abide by the procedures set forth in this Policy for the duration of their relationship with the Western Montana Conservation Commission.

Signature _____ Date _____

Name _____

Contact Information:

Mailing Address _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____



Tuesday, May 12, 2026

TO: Western Montana Conservation Commission Members

FROM: Casey Lewis, WMCC Executive Director
Stephanie Murphy, WMCC Communications Coordinator

SUBJECT: Western Montana Funding for Water & Wastewater Presentation at WMCC Meeting

ACTION ITEM:

INFORMATIONAL ITEM:

Summary:

Steve Howke, District Director for Representative Zinke, Matt Zacharias, Field Representative and Veteran Liaison for Representative Zinke, and Ravalli County Commissioner Jeff Burrows will present at the May 20, 2026 Western Montana Conservation Commission meeting. The presentation and discussion will focus on funding appropriations for western Montana for water and wastewater projects and will include time for questions.

Requested Action:

Please review the following information prior to the discussion.

Below are selected excerpts from Representative Zinke’s newsletters and press releases related to funding for water and wastewater projects in western Montana. More details can be found here: <https://zinke.house.gov/media/press-releases>

March 2026: Congressman Zinke traveled across Western Montana to deliver millions of dollars in federal funding he secured through the FY2026 appropriations process.

- Ravalli County, \$2,500,000 – Ravalli County Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Granite County, \$1,750,000 – Philipsburg Water Transmission Line Upgrade
- Missoula County, \$10,000,000 – Seeley Lake Wastewater Treatment Plant

April 2026: Rep. Ryan Zinke announced that he requested \$102,554,449 of federal funding for 19 projects in Western Montana to improve infrastructure, boost affordable housing construction, improve water dependability, disaster preparedness, and law enforcement and first responders’ capabilities.

- Butte-Silver Bow County, \$15,000,000 – Critical Minerals Extraction Advancements by Montana Tech
- Flathead County, \$3,000,000 – Bigfork Water Sewer District West Trunk Sewer Project





- Flathead County, \$3,100,000 – City of Columbia Falls Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvement Phase 1
- Flathead County, \$3,653,000 – Evergreen Flood Resiliency and Groundwater Quality Improvements
- Flathead County, \$3,000,000 – Lakeside Wastewater System Improvements Project Phase 1
- Granite County, \$2,000,000 – Granite County Clean Water Infrastructure Project Phase II
- Lake County, \$3,000,000 – Charlo Water and Sewer District Wastewater Lagoon Rehabilitation
- Lake County, \$3,000,000 – Ronan Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrade Phase 1
- Lincoln County, \$3,000,000 – City of Libby Water Filtration Phase 1
- Missoula County, \$2,240,000 – Lolo Wastewater Well Upgrades Phase II
- Missoula County, \$18,616,710 – Seeley Lake Wastewater Treatment Plant Project Phase II
- Ravalli County, \$11,587,000 – Ravalli County Water Treatment Plant Phase II

Monday, May 11, 2026

TO: Western Montana Conservation Commission Members
FROM: Casey Lewis, WMCC Executive Director
SUBJECT: WMCC Project Requests - Decisions (January 2026 – May 2026)

ACTION ITEM:

INFORMATIONAL ITEM:

Summary:

WMCC receives requests for projects, letters of support, and topics of consideration/public comments through our website: [Coordination & Collaboration - Western Montana Conservation Commission](#)

Staff review submissions and bring the requests to the Chair, Executive Director, or Executive Committee for review and decision based on the funding level decision points voted on at the January 2025 WMCC Meeting. Below is a summary of the project request decisions the Executive Committee has made since the last Commission meeting (January 2026 – May 2026).

Date: 1/14/26

Entity: Flathead Lake Biological Station

Decision: Letter of Collaboration Provided

Title: National Science Foundation Proposal – Collaborative Research FEC: Wildfire impacts on lake ecosystems: Building capacity for living with wildfire through research, workforce development, and community engagement

Summary: If funded, this 4-year project will use “Living Labs,” half-day workshops held three times a year in years 2 and 3 of the grant, to collaboratively shape research and training with local and regional partners. These sessions will gather feedback, incorporate participants’ knowledge, share findings, and explore how results can guide forest and water management, and the team requested a WMCC representative to take part.

Date: 1/27/26

Entity: City of Missoula, Commission Member Request

Decision: Neutral Public Comment

Title: Public Comment – DEQ’s Draft Nonpoint Source Management Plan

Summary: Western Montana Conservation Commission expressed support for DEQ’s nonpoint source management work and agrees that Section 319 funds should not be used for permit compliance, while asking DEQ to clarify why projects within MS4 boundaries are excluded and how this aligns with EPA



guidance, and suggesting a clear process, criteria, and examples for funding “above and beyond” MS4 activities so Section 319 funding and MS4 efforts can better complement each other in addressing urban and non-urban nonpoint source pollution.

Date: 2/20/26

Entity: Flathead Lakers

Decision: Letter of Support Provided

Title: Montana Department of Environmental Quality’s Section 319 Nonpoint Source Program for the shoreline restoration and stormwater treatment improvement project at Polson Bay Golf Course

Summary: WMCC submitted a letter of support to the grant committee endorsing the Flathead Lakers’ Section 319 proposal for shoreline restoration and stormwater treatment improvements at Polson Bay Golf Course. WMCC states the project aligns with Section 319 goals, will provide measurable water quality benefits to Flathead Lake and downstream waters, and can serve as a model for Green Stormwater Infrastructure in recreational landscapes. WMCC also notes that it previously awarded the Flathead Lakers a \$50,000 grant for this effort in May 2025 and urges favorable consideration of the proposal.

Date: 2/23/26

Entity: Montana Department of Environmental Quality

Decision: Letter of Commitment Provided

Title: Pastures & Partnerships: Motivating Impactful Water Quality Improvement

Summary: WMCC provided a letter of support for Montana DEQ’s “Pastures & Partnerships” environmental education grant application to EPA, committing to collaborate on behavior-change strategies that reduce septic leachate, stormwater pollution, and streamside grazing impacts. WMCC highlights that the project will extend proven outreach approaches statewide beyond its current western Montana focus and commits at least \$7,000 in staff time to share research findings and help design effective social marketing and grazing management strategies.

Date: 2/25/26

Entity: Missoula Department of Ecology and Extension

Decision: Partially Funded – \$1500

Title: Aquatic Invasive Species Educational Materials

Summary: Funding for MCDEE to reprint the invasive species trifold.

Date: 3/3/26

Entity: Montana Conservation Corps partnering with FWP and CSKT

Decision: Funded – \$3000

Title: 2026 CSKT-FWP-MCC: Collaborative Initiative for Non-Native Bullfrog Mitigation and Awareness on the Flathead Reservation and Surrounding Wetlands



Summary: Over the past five years, CSKT, FWP, and Montana Conservation Corps have built a strong partnership to detect, control, and remove invasive American bullfrogs in the Mission Valley and Flathead Reservation, removing over 10,000 bullfrogs and identifying multiple established breeding sites. The program uses trained AmeriCorps members to implement targeted, site-specific eradication, monitoring, and outreach, and will continue in 2026 with a new cohort focused on treatment of known sites, early detection of new ponds, and community education to protect local wetlands, fisheries, and wildlife.

Date: 3/10/26

Entity: Missoula Department of Ecology and Extension

Decision: Not Funded

Title: Aquatic Invasive Species Monitoring

Summary: MCDEE's proposed monitoring project included the Clearwater Chain of Lakes, and the funding request for WMCC to support was \$4k - \$10k. Executive Committee discussion included members expressing concerns about long-term planning and the lab for eDNA samples. Committee members weighed the pros and cons of funding partially or fully, and potential funds from the Montana Invasive Species Council. Motion to not fund passed 3-2.

Date: 4/3/26

Entity: Flathead Lakers

Decision: Funded – \$2915

Title: Flathead Lakers Aquatic Invasive Species Signage

Summary: Flathead Lakers will continue installing and updating aquatic invasive species (AIS) signs at high-risk boat access sites in the Flathead Basin in 2026. They will assess existing signs, add new ones where needed, and record all sign work in a regional database managed by Missoula County's Department of Ecology and Extension. The updated, simplified signs will highlight AIS inspection requirements, the risks of invasive mussels, and the need to clean, drain, and dry watercraft.



Wednesday, May 13, 2026

TO: Western Montana Conservation Commission Members
FROM: Krista Lammers, WMCC Grant Administrative Specialist
Casey Lewis, WMCC Executive Director
SUBJECT: WMCC’s EPA Toxics Reduction Lead Grant – Status Overview

ACTION ITEM:

INFORMATIONAL ITEM:

Summary:

Grant Program Information

WMCC received a Columbia River Basin Toxics Reduction Lead Grant from the EPA in late 2023. WMCC’s grant is titled “Montana Waters: Clearly Connected – Reducing Stormwater and Septic Leachate Toxic Pollution in the Headwaters of the Columbia River Basin” and includes \$6,998,074 in grant funds and \$2,334,973 in match, which will result in \$9,333,047 being implemented in western Montana.

The grant award spans 6 years, 10/1/23 – 9/30/29.

Background and Discussion:

The following pages provide a high-level overview of the grant workplan, summarizing key activities, current implementation status, and budget status across competitive grants, direct subawards, contracts, and research, marketing, and communications tasks.

Part of the funding, nearly \$3.2 million, is designated for four competitive grant programs that WMCC developed in 2024. Applications opened in January 2025, and \$3,086,720 is currently obligated/awarded. A total of \$101,247 of competitive grant funds remains unobligated, and WMCC staff are determining how best to allocate remaining funds while maintaining alignment with the approved grant priorities.

Recommended Action and Next Steps:

Commission members are encouraged to review the enclosed WMCC EPA Grant document and submit any questions to grant staff.

Staff Contact:

Krista Lammers - Grant Administrative Specialist, Krista.Lammers@mt.gov

Heidi Fleury - Grant Program Specialist, Heidi.Fleury@mt.gov





Competitive Grant Categories and Requirements:

1. Residential Septic System Education & Maintenance Program - \$50,000 max award
2. Septic System Replacement & Sewer Connectivity - \$80,000 max award
3. Residential & Community Green Stormwater Infrastructure Program - \$50,000 max award
4. Showcase Green Stormwater Infrastructure Project - \$1,100,000 max award

Each program requires a 25% non-federal cost-share. Eligible applicants include tribal governments, local governments, non-profit organizations, and education organizations that serve western Montana.

Grant Review Processes:

Prior to substantive review, applications are screened for eligibility and completeness and ranked for organizational risk. Risk determinations inform staff of the level of support an organization may need if the application is funded to meet state and federal requirements.

Each grant category had review teams of 4-6 people consisting of WMCC staff, WMCC commission members, DNRC CARDD staff, and other experts. Individual reviewers score submissions, and then the grant review teams meet and discuss the applications prior to making final recommendations for funding.

For grant funding recommendations below \$200,000, the review team's recommendations are brought to WMCC's Executive Committee for approval prior to initiating grant contracting. For grant funding recommendations above \$200,000, the review team's recommendations are brought to WMCC's Executive Committee and the full Commission for approval prior to initiating grant contracting.



Overview of Competitive Grant Programs

Grant Program	Applications Received	Applications Under Review	Applications Funded	Obligated Grant Funds
Residential Septic System Education & Maintenance Grant Program	6	0	6	\$234,858
Septic System Replacement & Sewer Connectivity Grant Program	9	0	5	\$400,000
Residential & Community Green Stormwater Infrastructure Grant Program	5	0	4	\$162,447
Showcase Green Stormwater Infrastructure Project	5	0	3	\$2,289,415
Total Awarded				\$3,086,720
Unobligated Grant Funds				\$101,247



Competitive Grant Program Statuses at a Glance

Residential Septic System Education & Maintenance Grant Program

Grant Program Objective: Develop or expand residential septic maintenance programs that provide cost-share, outreach, and programming on water quality impacts.

Review team members include:

- Arthur Potts, Avista and WMCC Member
- Bobbie DuBose, DNRC CARDD
- Heidi Fleury, WMCC Grant Staff
- Krista Lammers, WMCC Grant Staff (Lake CD only)
- Stephanie Murphy, WMCC Staff

Grant Awards at a Glance

Applicant	Grant Project	Match Amount	Total Project Budget	Funding Awarded
Flathead County Water & Sewer District No. 1: Evergreen	Evergreen Water and Sewer District Education Program	\$12,500	\$62,500	\$50,000
Thompson Chain of Lakes Stewardship Coalition (TCLSC)	TCLSC Septic System Health & Maintenance Education Program	\$22,657	\$71,521	\$48,864
Lake County Conservation District	Flathead Basin Septic Maintenance Reimbursement Program 2025	\$51,657	\$101,643	\$50,000
Flathead Lakers	Flathead Lakers Focused High Risk Septic Education & Outreach Program	\$41,411	\$91,405	\$49,994
Little Bitterroot Lake Association, Inc.	Little Bitterroot Lake Association Residential Septic System Education, Awareness, & Maintenance Program	\$5,000	\$25,000	\$20,000
Clearwater Resource Council	Seeley Lake Septic Pumping Cost Share Program	\$6,375	\$22,375	\$16,000



Septic System Replacement & Sewer Connectivity Grant Program

Grant Program Objective: Support projects that benefit local water quality by replacing septic systems or connecting to sewer services.

Review team members include:

- Sara Edinberg, Montana Bureau of Mines & Geology (MBMG) & WMCC Member
- Rick Duncan, DNRC CARDD
- Michele Marsh, DEQ SRF Loan Section
- Heidi Fleury, WMCC Grant Staff
- Kelly Hendrix, WMCC Staff

Grant Awards at a Glance

Applicant	Grant Project	Match Amount	Total Project Budget	Funding Awarded
Hideaway Community Water & Sewer District	Hideaway Community Water & Sewer District Improvement Project	\$143,000	\$1,687,000	\$80,000
Morning Star Community, Inc.	Morning Star Resident-Owned Community Sewer Connectivity Project	\$318,560	\$3,205,000	\$80,000
Green Acres Cooperative, Inc.	Green Acres Cooperative Sewer Improvement Project	\$20,000	\$1,331,601	\$80,000
Flathead County Water & Sewer District No. 1: Evergreen	Evergreen Septic Tanks Replacement Project	\$20,000	\$100,000	\$80,000
North Powell Conservation District	NPCD Septic Cost Share Program	\$36,078	\$116,078	\$80,000



Residential & Community Green Stormwater Infrastructure Grant Program

Grant Program Objective: Develop or expand residential green stormwater infrastructure programs that provide development support, programming, and outreach on water quality impacts.

Review team members include:

- Tracy Campbell, City of Missoula Stormwater and WMCC Member
- Shawna Swanz, DNRC CARDD
- Catey Bauer, DNRC CARDD (Missoula Department of Ecology & Extension only)
- Kristen Jordan, WMCC Grant Staff
- Emilie Henry, WMCC Staff

Grant Awards at a Glance

Applicant	Grant Project	Match Amount	Total Project Budget	Funding Awarded
Flathead Conservation District	Flathead Rain Garden Initiative	\$3,824	\$16,274	\$12,450
Flathead Lakers	Boettcher Park Stormwater Capture and Filtration Project	\$147,024	\$197,021	\$49,997*
Missoula Department of Ecology & Extension	Native Plant Programming & ReWild Initiative	\$20,428	\$70,428	\$50,000
City of Missoula Rose Park Neighborhood	Neighborhood Rain Garden Demonstration Project	\$12,990	\$62,990	\$50,000

*Initial award includes a required milestone prior to the release of full funding.



Showcase Green Stormwater Infrastructure Project Grant

Grant Program Objective: Create green stormwater infrastructure projects designed to mitigate pollution and reduce runoff while showcasing co-benefits.

Review team members include:

- Matt Peterson, ERM NewFields and WMCC Member
- Catey Bauer, DNRC CARDD
- Samantha Treu, DNRC CARDD
- Ella Lunny, DEQ Nonpoint Source
- Casey Lewis, WMCC Staff
- Krista Lammers, WMCC Grant Staff

Grant Awards at a Glance

Applicant	Grant Project	Match Amount	Total Project Budget	Funding Awarded
City of Missoula	Missoula Public Library Living Roof	\$ 275,000	\$1,375,000	\$1,000,000
Butte-Silver Bow City County	Father Sheehan Park Green Stormwater Infrastructure Revitalization Project	\$ 326,200	\$,1416,200	\$1,090,000
Anaconda Lincoln Elementary	Lincoln Elementary School Green Stormwater Playground Project	\$150,000	\$300,000	\$199,415*

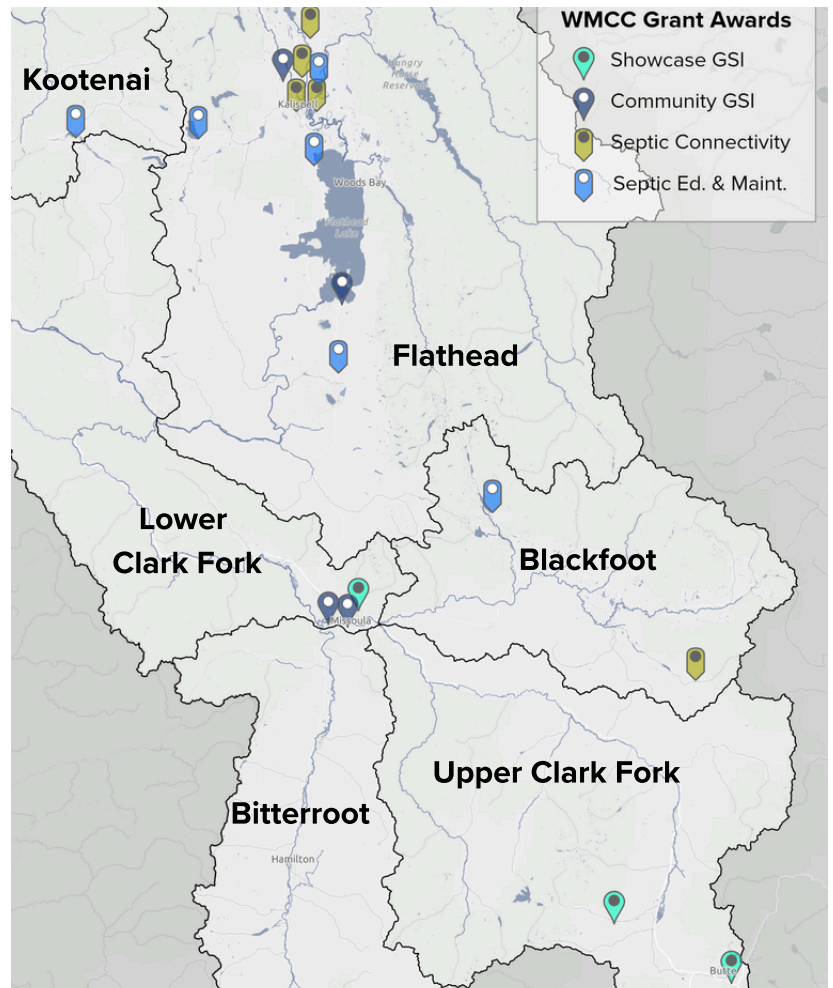


Montana Waters: Clearly Connected
Reducing Stormwater and Septic Leachate
Toxic Pollution in the Headwaters of the
Columbia River Basin

EPA Funds Competitive Subaward Grant Program:
Stormwater and Septic Leachate Toxics Reduction Grant Program

WMCC Competitive award programs total \$3.2 million dollars and have been awarded across Western Montana to local eligible entities to host education, outreach, cost-share programs and projects addressing toxic pollution reduction from stormwater and septic leachate.

- \$2.2 Million Showcase Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI)
- \$245,000 Community Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI)
- \$400,000 Septic System Replacement & Connectivity
- \$240,000 Septic System Education & Maintenance



Stormwater Grant Programs - 2026 Plans

Showcase Green Stormwater Infrastructure Projects - 3 Projects

- **\$1 M** - City of Missoula for a Living Roof
 - Contract, MEPA, are complete and Construction QAPP in progress.
 - Bid Documents received and reviewed.
 - Construction to begin in 2026.
- **\$199,415** - Anaconda's Lincoln Elementary School Playground Green Stormwater Infrastructure
 - Contract and Construction QAPP in progress, MEPA is complete.
 - Bid Documents received and processed.
 - Construction to begin June 2026.
- **\$1.09 M** - Butte-Silverbow County for the Father Sheehan Park
 - Contract, MEPA and Construction QAPP in progress.
 - Final engineering and design 2026, construction to begin in Spring 2027.

Community Green Stormwater Infrastructure - 2 Programs, 2 Projects

- **\$12,450** - Flathead Rain Garden Initiative
 - Used funds for Fall 2025 Rain Garden Plantings.
 - 4 Rain Gardens planted so far! Program is advertising now for 2026.
- **\$50,000** - Missoula County Department of Ecology & Extension Native Plant Programming & ReWild Initiative
 - Native plant programming begins June 2026, greenhouse to be installed in 2027.
- **\$5,000 (\$45,000 pending)** - Flathead Lakers Boettcher Park Stormwater Capture and Filtration Project
 - Final drawings have been received from the Landscape Architect.
 - Still waiting on construction submittal items. Full funds won't be released until WMCC receive the additional items requested.
 - Construction – hoping for Fall 2026.
- **\$50,000** - City of Missoula Rose Park Neighborhood Rain Garden
 - Finalizing contract, MEPA, and design.
 - Construction to coincide with a City of Missoula 2026 re-surfacing project.

Septic Grant Programs - 2026 Plans

Residential Septic System Education and Maintenance Programs - 6 Programs

- **\$50,000** - Flathead Lakers Focused High Risk Septic Education and Outreach
 - Started to make targeted septic outreach videos with NBC Montana.
 - Education, outreach and town hall events will begin Spring 2026.
- **\$50,000** - Evergreen Water and Sewer District Education
 - Researching mobile education displays around western Montana and gathering lessons learned. Completed a trip in Fall 2025 to Spokane to an education center and got a lot of good information.
 - Final Design to begin Fall 2026.
 - Construction/fabrication of mobile education trailer Spring 2027.
- **\$20,000** - Little Bitterroot Lake Association Residential Septic System Education, Awareness & Maintenance Program
 - Secured an employee to go door-to-door from June 2026-August 2026.
 - Getting website and other technical logistics figured out now.
- **\$50,000** - Thompson Chain of Lakes Stewardship Coalition (TCLSC) Septic System Health and Maintenance Education Program
 - Developing program materials and plan for outreach now.
- **\$50,000** - Flathead Basin Septic Maintenance Reimbursement Program
 - Application went live and the program re-opened in March 2026.
 - Tons of interest so far.
- **\$16,000** - Clearwater Resource Council Septic Pumping Cost Share
 - Getting contract and other paperwork items completed.
 - Developing program materials and applications now.
 - Program launches June 2026.

Wastewater Connectivity Upgrades - 5 Projects

- **\$80,000** - Evergreen Septic Tanks Replacement
 - Contractor selected and working on final engineering and design.
 - Construction bid process to start late Summer 2026 with implementation to begin Fall 2026.
- **\$80,000** - Green Acres Cooperative Sewer Improvement
 - Contractor selected and construction is underway and will be complete in 2026.
- **\$80,000** - Morning Star Resident Owned Community Sewer Connectivity
 - Contractor selected and construction underway and will be complete in 2026.
- **\$80,000** - Hideaway Community Water & Sewer District Sewer Improvement
 - Contractor has been selected, had some trouble starting due to high groundwater. Construction to begin ASAP and conclude at the Fall 2026.
- **\$80,000** - North Powell Conservation District Septic Cost Share Program
 - Applications are completed, approved by the Board and program advertisement has begun.
 - Selection of applicants and replacement planning will happen later in 2026 with installs projected to begin in 2027.

Competitive Grant Funds - May 2026

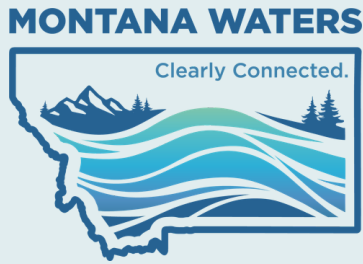
Total Grant Funds Available = \$3,187,967

Grant Funds Awarded = \$3,086,720

Grant Funds Remaining = \$101,247

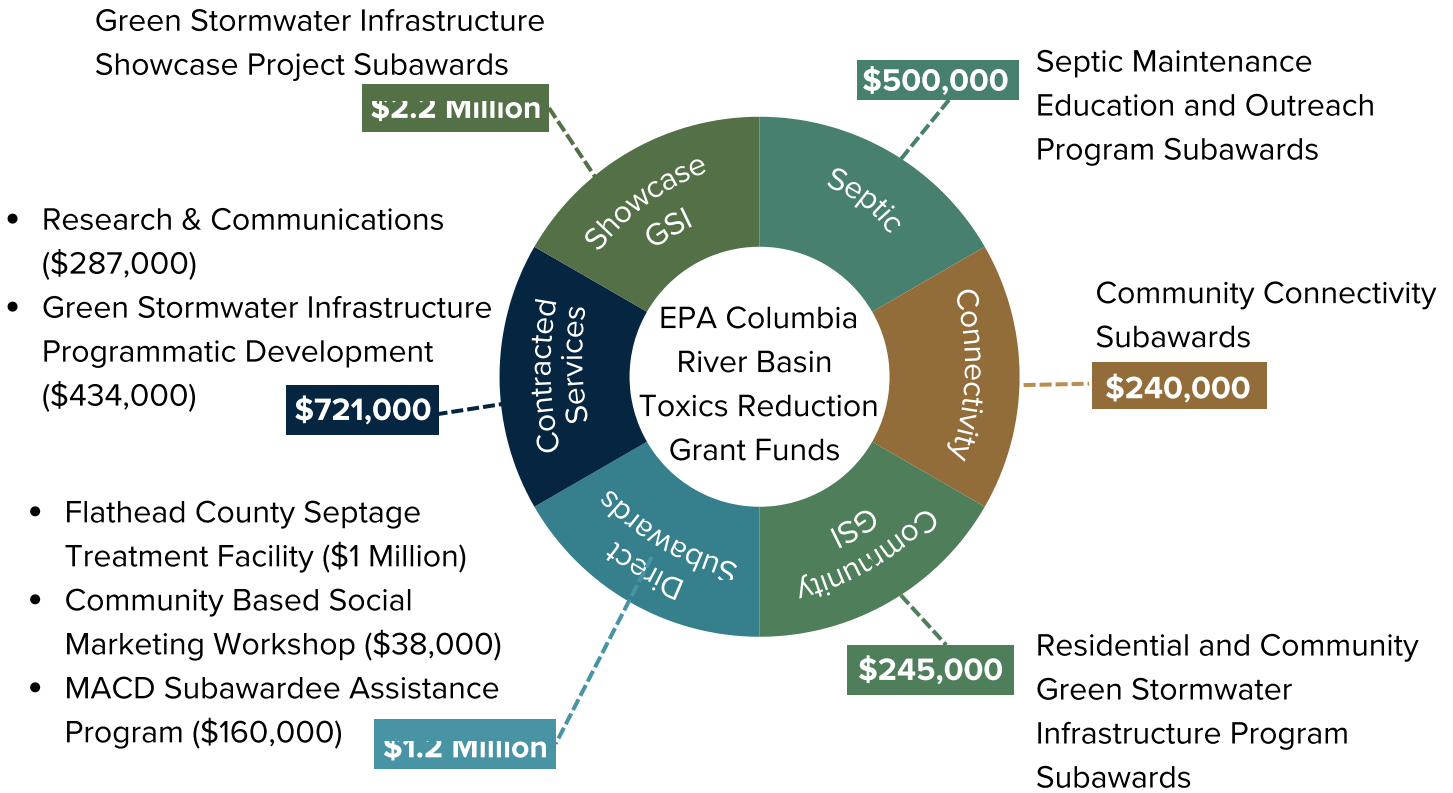
Total of 18 Projects and Programs!
Grant funds expire in 2029.
Check out our website for more information.





Montana Waters: Clearly Connected
Reducing Stormwater and Septic Leachate
Toxic Pollution in the Headwaters of the
Columbia River Basin

WMCC EPA Grant Funds



Summary

Grant Contract Breakdown

- \$7M total with \$2.3M match = \$9.3M
- \$5.3M in programs, projects, contracted services, and direct subawards
- \$1.7M in staff funds (salaries, benefits, travel) for 6 years, including two program specialists and one grant administrative specialist

EPA Funds - Direct Subaward Contracts and Contracted Services

In addition to the competitive funds, WMCC staff are also managing \$2M in direct subawards and contracted services. The direct subawards were negotiated at the time of the grant award and the contracted services are procured through State of MT Procurement Services and result in contracts that help create community research tools, education and outreach materials, and industry outreach materials for stormwater management.

Direct Subawards Funds

\$1 Million	Flathead County Septage Treatment Facility Supports the planning and design costs associated with the facility.
\$160,000	Montana Association of Conservation Districts Subawardee Assistance Programs WMCC worked with MACD staff to offer grant management professional development services to interested applicants and subawardees in the future.
\$33,000	Community Based Social Marketing Workshop WMCC worked with MACD to contract a workshop (November 2024) to train outreach specialists from partner organizations across Western Montana. Attendees were trained on the most effective outreach methods for our communities.

Flathead County - Expended: \$74,946.53

Flathead County’s grant contract was fully executed on March 26, 2025. With DEQ’s permit issued for Phase 1, work has advanced to planning, permitting, and design for Phase 2, supported by WMCC grant funding. This project is financed through multiple funding sources, including state ARPA funds, the State Revolving Fund (SRF), and WMCC EPA funds. The county continues to submit timely progress reports to WMCC.

MACD Including CBSM Workshop - Expended: \$64,184.02

Multiple grant writing and grant management workshops have been offered over the past two years, providing practical, hands-on training for partners and organizations within the WMCC footprint. These workshops give partners and subawardees meaningful support as they navigate funding opportunities and grant requirements. Together, these trainings help to build the skills and capacity needed to secure additional funding, keep programs and projects moving forward, and manage grants effectively over time.

CBSM Workshop

MACD worked with WMCC to host a three half-day Community-Based Social Marketing (CBSM) workshop with renowned environmental psychologist Dr. Doug McKenzie-Mohr, provided to 99 participants. The tools and frameworks shared in this workshop will be applied beyond the life of this grant and are already being incorporated into many WMCC-funded subgrants.

Contracted Services Funds

\$434,000	<p>Green Stormwater Infrastructure Programmatic Development The Stormwater Advisory Council will advise and collaborate to develop resources that promote and support a sustainable green stormwater infrastructure program in Montana.</p>
\$125,000	<p>Community Research Professional services to identify resident baseline knowledge and guide outreach plans.</p>
\$112,000	<p>Community & Outreach Development CBSM informed campaign to expand Montana Waters: Clearly Connected initiative.</p>

Stormwater Advisory Council - Expended: \$0

The Council has rounded out its membership with 18 representatives, adding stormwater professionals, engineers, landscape architects, DEQ staff, and national experts to better address complex GSI and stormwater challenges. The group meets monthly, is building partnerships with organizations such as the Cold Climate Stormwater Center of Excellence, Headwaters Economics, and the Green Infrastructure Leadership Exchange, and is working with WaterNow through a Project Accelerator that provides up to 250 hours of technical assistance to co-develop a statewide GSI roadmap. That roadmap is organized around a small set of core program directions, including strengthening regulatory and guidance frameworks, expanding the Council’s convening and support role for communities, and exploring longer-term tools such as funding mechanisms, technical assistance, and university-based support to sustain GSI work over time.

Community Research - Expended: \$2,557.24

A contract with the University of Montana social science research team is in place, expert interviews are complete, and initial behavior selection is finished. The research will help WMCC and partners improve public engagement on nonpoint source pollution by testing how the CBSM framework and behavior change tools work in Western Montana communities. WMCC will use the findings to shape future outreach efforts, recognizing that the research is intended to guide programs rather than set regulatory standards.

Communications & Outreach Development - Expended: \$0

A request for proposal was crafted and reviewed by WMCC staff and the WMCC Education, Outreach, and Communications Committee. WMCC published the RFP and provided written responses to clarifying questions so all proposers received the same information. Twenty proposals were submitted; five WMCC staff and two subject matter experts independently reviewed and ranked them, and a firm was selected. A Notice of Intent to Award has been issued for Cascadia Consulting Group, Inc., and WMCC anticipates having the contract fully executed by the end of the current fiscal year.

Grant Management Plan

A comprehensive effort is underway to strengthen WMCC/DNRC's federal award and subaward compliance infrastructure, with emphasis on alignment with the federal 2 CFR Part 200 and EPA-specific requirements.

This work addresses system-level responsibilities associated with serving as a grant recipient and focuses on ensuring that internal controls, such as risk assessments, subaward agreements, and monitoring practices, are audit-ready. Federal requirements are being cross-walked against existing DNRC and State of Montana policies to identify areas of confirmed compliance and areas requiring clarification or structural updates.

The result will be an integrated, audit-ready compliance framework designed to reduce audit and enforcement risk and ensure continued eligibility and responsible stewardship of federal funds.

Quality Assurance Project Plans

Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) ensure that grant-funded research, modeling, and construction activities follow rigorous standards and align with EPA guidelines. WMCC staff have developed and obtained EPA approval for programmatic and community human-subject research QAPPs, as well as a modeling QAPP, to guide this work. In addition, multiple construction and modeling QAPPs for subaward projects have been completed or are in development to help ensure consistent quality and compliance across all activities.

Reporting

The grant requires semi-annual reporting to EPA. Reporting periods span October 1 - September 30 of the relevant year, and reports are due to the EPA in April and October. Since the grant spans 6 years, 12 semi-annual reports are required.

REPORTS SUBMITTED: 5 of 12

CURRENT REPORTING PERIOD: 6 of 12



BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING PARTNERHIPS

Meetings, events, and outreach are essential to WMCC grant work because they transform planning and funding into genuine relationships, shared learning, and tangible on-the-ground improvements in western Montana communities. Outreach weaves partners together, brings local priorities to the surface, and demonstrates impact through visible participation, meaningful behavior change, and compelling community stories.

MEETINGS & EVENTS

January 2026 - Present

- Morning Star ROC Annual Meeting
- Western Montana Native Plants Collaboration
- Water Policy Interim Committee
- Environmental Quality Council
- Flathead Family Forestry Expo
- Big Sky Watershed Corps StoryMaps Training - Lead Trainer
- 2026 Aquatic Invasive Species Short Course
- WildWalk Missoula Table
- Clark Fork River Cleanup Team
- EPA Columbia River Basin Working Group In-Person Meeting
- Montana Invasive Species Council Quarterly Meeting
- On-Site Wastewater Treatment Committee In-Person Meeting
- Columbia River Basin Toxics Monitoring Subgroup
- NEMA Stormwater BMP Training Course
- FLBS WMCC EPA Grant Collaboration
- Great Plains Stormwater Center of Excellence Conference Planning
- 2026 MWCC Annual Meeting
- EPA Tribal & Lead Toxics Meeting
- Morning Star/Green Acres Project Meeting
- W2ASACT Infrastructure Funding Presentation
- Free the Seeds Table
- MT PSPP Monthly Meetings
- Bitterroot Water Partnership
- MWCC Columbia River Basin Watershed Tour Planning
- Crown Management Partnership
- National Association of State Conservation Agencies
- Montana Weed Control Association - Presenter
- University of Texas Synthetic DNA Discussion
- River2Lakes Initiative Meeting
- Montana DEQ



Tuesday, May 12, 2026

TO: Western Montana Conservation Commission Members

FROM: Stephanie Murphy, Communications Coordinator

SUBJECT: Commission Member Talking Points

ACTION ITEM:

INFORMATIONAL ITEM:

Summary:

After the WMCC January 2026 Meeting, Commission Members and the Education, Outreach, and Communications (EOC) committee identified a need for talking points that highlight the different areas of WMCC's programs and grants. The talking points, developed together with WMCC staff and the EOC committee chair, Kate Wilson, are subject to change with additional programmatic updates.

Requested Action:

Review the following talking points and follow up with Stephanie Murphy with any questions.



Commission Member Talking Points

The information below is intended to provide a brief overview of WMCC, our work, and ongoing major projects. Much of this information is provided in more detail on our website: www.westernmtwaters.com. Please contact WMCC's Communications Coordinator, Stephanie Murphy, if you seek additional information, intend to formally share information with the public or press, or if you have any questions.

Email (preferred): stephanie.murphy@mt.gov Phone: (406) 499-3676

WHAT IS THE WESTERN MONTANA CONSERVATION COMMISSION?

- The Western Montana Conservation Commission (WMCC) is a non-regulatory organization created by the Montana Legislature in 2023 to protect the existing high quality of western Montana's aquatic resources.
- The WMCC combined and replaced the Flathead Basin Commission and the Upper Columbia Conservation Commission.
- WMCC operates in watersheds west of the Continental Divide (the Upper Columbia Basin).
- The WMCC's membership includes 16 voting members and 18 advisory members who represent a wide cross-section of citizens and local, state, tribal, and federal agency representatives.
- The WMCC is administratively attached to the State of Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC).

MISSION & DUTIES

- The WMCC's mission is to protect and improve the quality of western Montana's aquatic resources.
- The WMCC is tasked with:
 - monitoring the condition of aquatic and natural resources in western Montana,
 - supporting the continuation of a comprehensive aquatic invasive species prevention program,
 - enhancing collaboration among natural resource partners and agencies,
 - undertaking investigations related to water quality and natural resource utilization,



- and holding public hearings concerning the condition of the aquatic resources and other natural resources in western Montana.
- For a full list of duties, see the [Western Montana Conservation Commission Act \(MCA 85-1-904\)](#).

COMMITTEES

Commission Members and collaborating partners play an important role in shaping the work of the Western Montana Conservation Commission through participation in committees. All Commission and Committee meetings are open to the public.

Committees include:

- Executive
- Aquatic Invasive Species
- Monitoring & Coordination
- On-site Wastewater Treatment
- Stormwater Advisory Council
- Education, Outreach & Communications

PROGRAMS & FUNDING

Nonpoint Source Pollution

- The WMCC was awarded a \$7 million Columbia River Basin Toxics Reduction Grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2023 to address escalating challenges posed by toxic pollution from stormwater and aging septic systems in western Montana’s watersheds, the headwaters of the Columbia River Basin.
- These funds are already helping 18 local projects keep our local waters cleaner, improve water quality, upgrade septic systems, expand nature-based stormwater infrastructure, and encourage everyday behavior changes that protect water quality and support healthier, more resilient neighborhoods and local economies.
 - For a full list of project, visit the [WMCC’s grant page](#): westernMTwaters.com
 - Project examples include (list is not exhaustive):
 - Over \$2 million to two showcase green stormwater infrastructure projects including installing a living roof on the Missoula Public Library, schoolyard improvements at Lincoln Elementary in Anaconda, and revitalizing Father Sheehan Park in Butte.
 - Septic education and homeowner maintenance assistance programs with organizations such as Little Bitterroot Lake Association, Clearwater Resource Council, Lake County Conservation District, and Thompson Chain of Lakes Stewardship Coalition.



- Neighborhood rain garden in Missoula and stormwater retention pond in Polson that improve water quality and engage community members in stormwater pollution prevention.
 - Sewer connections for two resident-owned communities in the Flathead, Morning Star Community and Green Acres Cooperative.
 - Septic replacements for homeowners in the upper Nevada Creek area with North Powell Conservation District.
- The Commission also offers [toolkits](#) that provide a variety of resources to develop or bolster programs that address nonpoint source pollution. The Community Rain Garden Program Toolkit is intended to help mitigate stormwater pollution, and the Septic Education & Maintenance Program Toolkit is intended to help prevent septic leachate pollution.

Aquatic Invasive Species

- Montana's Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) monitoring and prevention program is led by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. The WMCC supports these efforts via education and outreach on AIS and the Clean. Drain. Dry. campaign.
 - The WMCC leads an industry outreach project to engage and connect with aquatic-based businesses throughout western Montana. Our Big Sky Watershed Corps member meets with over 120 businesses each season, including marinas, boat shops, angling shops, guiding outfitters, and commercial outdoor retailers, creating and strengthening partnerships while spreading knowledge of aquatic invasive species.

Education & Outreach

- The WMCC leads the [Montana Waters: Clearly Connected](#) campaign, which seeks to increase public awareness of water quality issues, ultimately enhancing personal behaviors and inspiring residents and visitors to take pride and responsibility in conservation efforts.
 - This collaborative campaign aims to increase consistency of messaging, increase resources, and enhance partnership opportunities.
 - Examples of [Montana Waters products](#) produced to date include public service announcement style videos, stickers, postcards, watershed graphics, and more. Visit montanawaters.com for more information.
- The Commission coordinates with partners from federal, state, non-profit, tribal, and local government to increase consistency of messaging and accessibility of available resources.



Project Funding

- The WMCC considers requests for program support and coordination to partners working on projects that align with the commission’s mission and priorities within western Montana.
 - This may include letters of support, project funding, or project collaboration.
 - For more information, visit [WMCC’s website](https://westernMTwaters.com): westernMTwaters.com
 - Project support examples include (list is not exhaustive):
 - \$7,500 to the Clark Fork Coalition for the development of the Central Clark Fork Watershed Restoration Plan
 - \$5,000 to the Salmonfly Project for aquatic insect conservation in Montana and submission to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks 100-year Species Wildlife Action Plan.
 - Donation of educational materials to Yaak Valley Forest Council, Flathead Lakers, Lake County Conservation District, Libby Dam Visitor Center, and others.
 - Letter of support to the Invasive Species Action Network for aquatic invasive species grant funding.

COMMISSION MEMBER SCRIPT

- Hello Chair [Insert Name] and members of the committee.
- My name is [spell First Name, Last Name].
- I am a member of the Western Montana Conservation Commission, or WMCC. I live in [City or County], and am here today representing myself, but wanted to let you know about some of the work of the Commission that I am most proud of.
- The WMCC was created by the Montana Legislature in 2023 to protect the existing high quality of western Montana’s aquatic resources.
- [Insert relevant highlights from talking points above.]
- The WMCC provides an excellent service as a convener, funder, and “umbrella” to support community groups, municipalities, and other Montana entities working to enhance water quality in the Upper Columbia Basin.
- Thank you for your time today and I would be happy to answer any questions or thoughts you may have related to the efforts of the Western Montana Conservation Commission.