

**DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
AND CONSERVATION**

Conservation & Resource Development Division

STEVE BULLOCK, GOVERNOR

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STATE OF MONTANA

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March 17, 2017

Governor Steve Bullock
Office of the Governor
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Governor Bullock,

Montana's monthly water and sewer user rates currently range from \$30 to \$160 per household. Rates are climbing, but it could be a lot worse.

In 1982 a group of professionals from state, federal, and non-profit organizations that finance water and wastewater systems decided to join forces to help Montana communities achieve their funding goals. This group called itself the "Water, Wastewater and Solid Waste Action Coordinating Team" or W²ASACT for short.

Thirty five years later we still work together to solve infrastructure funding problems. Our membership has expanded to include non-profit organizations that help with grant writing and technical assistance. Montana's engineering firms and congressional staff also attend WASACT quarterly meetings to get the latest updates and share their news.

Governor Bullock, please know that WASACT members appreciate your leadership for infrastructure funding. I have attached a report describing WASACT's purpose, membership, and accomplishments and enclosed the results of our latest survey summarizing water and sewer rates for 368 Montana communities.

On behalf of WASACT I invite you to visit our website and tell us how we can better help meet Montana's infrastructure funding needs. <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/cRDD/wasact>

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Enclosures

cc: John E. Tubbs, Director; Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

MONTANA W²ASACT - 2017 REPORT

WATER, WASTEWATER AND SOLID WASTE ACTION TEAM

Purpose

WASACT members combine forces to help Montana communities fund successful water and sewer projects. Funding authorities in WASACT help close the gap between what systems cost and what their users can afford.

Accomplishments - helping Montana Communities for 35 years

W²ASACT ASSISTS COMMUNITIES WITH FUNDING AND TECHNICAL NEEDS

- Brings regulators, program managers, and technical assistance providers together to troubleshoot project funding
- Streamlines the application process for community projects
- Holds Montana-wide infrastructure funding seminars every year
- Helps communities to be more self-reliant by funding capital improvements plans to avoid crisis-based infrastructure management
- Produces educational materials such as the *How to Hire an Engineer Handbook* and *Planning and Financing Community Systems in Montana*
- Maintains a website <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/cadd/wasact> with funding and project management guidance

W²ASACT SIMPLIFIES & COORDINATES FUNDING APPLICATIONS AND REPORTING

- Shares a uniform application for facility projects seeking multiple funders
- Developed a standardized financial tracking form used by all funders
- Publishes an annual summary of state and federal funding programs in Montana

W²ASACT DEVELOPS DECISION-MAKING TOOLS

- Developed financial indicators to help identify funding needs and keep projects affordable
- Promotes water metering and other conservation measures when scoring grant applications
- Regularly publishes statewide water and wastewater rates for over 350 Montana communities

MONTANA W²ASACT

WATER, WASTEWATER AND SOLID WASTE ACTION TEAM

W²ASACT Members & Participants

STATE AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS

Renewable Resources Grant and Loan Program (Natural Resources & Conservation)
Treasure State Endowment Program (Department of Commerce)
INTERCAP Program (Montana Board of Investments)
Public Water Supply Program (Department of Environmental Quality)
Municipal Wastewater Assistance Program (Department of Environmental Quality)
State Drinking Water Revolving Fund and State Wastewater Revolving Fund
(Depts of Environmental Quality and Natural Resources and Conservation)

FEDERAL AGENCIES

Environmental Protection Agency
Department of Agriculture Rural Development
Housing and Urban Development

ASSOCIATIONS AND NON PROFITS

Midwest Assistance Program
Montana Association of County Water and Sewer Systems
Montana Association of Counties
Montana League of Cities and Towns
Montana Rural Water Systems, Inc.
Rural and Tribal Environmental Solutions

OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Infrastructure Engineering and Consulting Firms
Infrastructure Funding Grant Writers
Congressional and Legislative Representatives

2017 Initiatives

Establish an outreach committee to improve WASACT coordination with Montana community groups and water quality enforcement agencies to better identify impending community infrastructure needs.

Extend the use of WASACT's uniform application to online procedures to further streamline the process for communities seeking funding from multiple agencies.