

# Water Management Issues Scoping in the Clark Fork & Kootenai River Basins

## Preliminary Synthesis

# The Issues Scoping Process at a Glance

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## Issues Scoping Meetings

Missoula - October 15

Hamilton - October 17

Anaconda - October 24

Kalispell - October 29

Libby Dam - October 30

Deer Lodge – TBD

# The Issues Scoping Process at a Glance

**140**

**Estimated participants,  
Clark Fork Task Force  
Members, and DNRC Staff**

# The Issues Scoping Process at a Glance

**49**

**Completed surveys  
(and they are still coming in)**

# **Missoula Preliminary Results**

# Water Supply and Demand

- Managing the **effects of climate change** on drought, flooding, snowpack, and other variables
- Protecting agriculture against future impacts from water shortages
- Meeting new **water storage** needs by finding “new” storage structures, including natural/wetland storage
- Protecting existing water rights holders from **exempt wells** and other pressures resulting from increased development

## Other Water Resources Priorities

- Increasing public education focused on the hydrologic cycle, in order to raise awareness
- Balancing the impact of growing population, land use changes, increasing pollution, and climate change on **water quality**
- Managing **aquatic invasive species**

## Data Needs

- Increasing availability of **water measurement data**, including snowpack, surface, and groundwater data
- Properly monitoring and measuring water usage

## Water Planning

- Making recommendations “actionable” so that local parties can deliver results

## Water Rights

- Improving the **efficiency and feasibility of the water rights change process** so that it is efficient, economical, and fair
- Adding flexibility to water rights marketing (rule changes and procedural streamlining)



# **Hamilton Preliminary Results**

## Water Supply and Demand

- Preventing ground and surface water depletion
- Funding **water storage improvements** and preserving of existing water storage facilities
- Upgrading aging **irrigation infrastructure**
- **Protecting existing uses** against over-allocation, loss, and pollution of surface and ground water due to **development**, septic systems, **groundwater wells**, etc.
- Protecting riparian areas and instream flow

## Other Water Resources Priorities

- Protecting **water quality** for fisheries purposes

## Water Rights

- Resolving water rights adjudication (related to CSKT Compact)
- Protecting existing water rights from infringements by water compacts, Bitterroot National Forest, municipalities, increased development, AVISTA, instream flow, recreational users, etc.
- Avoiding reclassification of irrigation water rights during development
- Increasing enforcement of existing water rights



# Anaconda Preliminary Results

# Water Supply and Demand Issues

- Ensuring ecological function is a priority in the new state water plan (including maintenance of **instream flow**, improvement of **water quality**, and maintenance of **connectivity**)
- Protecting aquifers via irrigation and beaver dams for fisheries protection
- Focusing on increased **water use efficiency**, and the specific programs and management strategies for instream water benefit
- Managing effects of **over-allocated water** on future economic growth

## **Other Water Resources Issues**

- Increasing public education of legal water management options
- Increasing knowledge of water management implications on water quality

## **Data Needs**

- Understanding the balance between spring flows and water needs (need for data and increased knowledge)

# Water Rights

- Improving and streamlining **water rights change process**; the burden to understand and act on specific management options should not be left to water users
- Completing the statewide water adjudication process
- Addressing concerns over **Milltown Dam rights** and the belief that instream flow rights should be junior to other decreed water rights
- Defense of water rights by the state of Montana on behalf of water rights holders (due to **high cost of defending a water right** and its economic impact on existing water users)



# **Kalispell Preliminary Results**

## Water Supply and Demand Issues

- Managing **over-allocation of water** in the Flathead Basin
- Managing **storage** issues: spring flows, flood control, and carry-over from wet to dry years
- Addressing concerns for the future of water storage in Kerr Dam and others

## Other Water Resources Issues

- Maintaining **water quality** and protecting against **aquatic invasive species**, TMDLs, and non-point source pollutants
- Maintaining flow and appropriate cold temperatures for fish and wildlife
- **Managing climate change**, and the need to mitigate for changing flows, mountain storage, and snowmelt
- Understanding how aging **forests** will affect stream yield

## Data Needs

- Providing **user-friendly data** on adjudication, flow data, and other information for all streams in Montana
- Taking a full **inventory** of existing surface water in order to obtain accurate stream flow measurements

## Water Rights

- Resolving CSKT Compact issues in a way that is fair and equitable
- Finishing adjudication
- Addressing concerns of federal rule over state sovereignty



# **Libby Dam Preliminary Results**

## **Water Supply and Demand Issues**

- Accommodating water uses associated with **future and growing industries** in the Kootenai Basin
- Addressing concerns that economic growth could be stopped or or slowed due to water policy in the future
- Solving the problem of over-appropriated water, specifically concerning **municipal water supplies** (i.e., City of Libby)
- **Balancing competing demands** for water in the Kootenai River Basin

## **Other Water Resources Issues**

- Preventing and managing **aquatic invasive species**
- General concern that input from meeting would not be used, and concern with the state water planning process. **Previous planning/management efforts in the Tobacco Valley have left Eureka citizens frustrated and lacking trust** for any future efforts.
- Concern that Endangered Species Act regulations could impact existing water rights

## Data Needs:

- Understanding the interconnections between instream water rights and existing water rights
- Quantifying allocated versus actual water use

## Water Rights

- Squaring away adjudication

## Governance

- Concern of federal involvement in Montana water policy; citizens would prefer that **local collaborative efforts** drive water policy and management
- **There is no “one size fits all” strategy** for Montana; can a state-wide management scheme be replaced with a basin-sized regulatory or management scheme?

