

Montana Water Supply Initiative

A Watershed Approach to Updating the Montana State Water Plan

Lower Missouri River Basin Advisory Council
Malta, October 2, 2013



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Water Resources Division



History of Water Planning in Montana

- 💧 Pre-1965 – Water Project Development Era
 - US Bureau of Reclamation (1902)
 - MT Water Resources Board (1933)
- 💧 1965 -1981 – Basin Planning Era
 - 1965- Federal Water Resources Planning Act, Basin Commissions
 - 1973-MT Water Resources Act
 - 1981- Federal funding ended
- 💧 1987-1999 – Section Planning Era
 - Issue Oriented
 - Focus on Policy Development
- 💧 1999 – Present
 - Support of local watershed groups



1973 Water Resources Act *§85-1-203 MCA*

(1) “The department (DNRC) shall gather from any source reliable, information relating to Montana’s water resources and prepare from the information a continuing comprehensive inventory of the water resources of the state.”



1973 Water Resources Act *§85-1-203 MCA*

...The state water plan must set out a progressive program for the conservation, development, and utilization, and sustainability of the state's water resources and propose the most effective means by which these water resources may be applied for the benefit of the people, with due consideration of alternative uses and combination of uses.”

Montana State Water Plan

💧 2009 – MT Legislature amends State Water Planning Statute (§85-1-203 MCA). Directs DNRC to Conduct:

- An inventory of consumptive and non-consumptive uses associated with existing water rights;



Montana State Water Plan

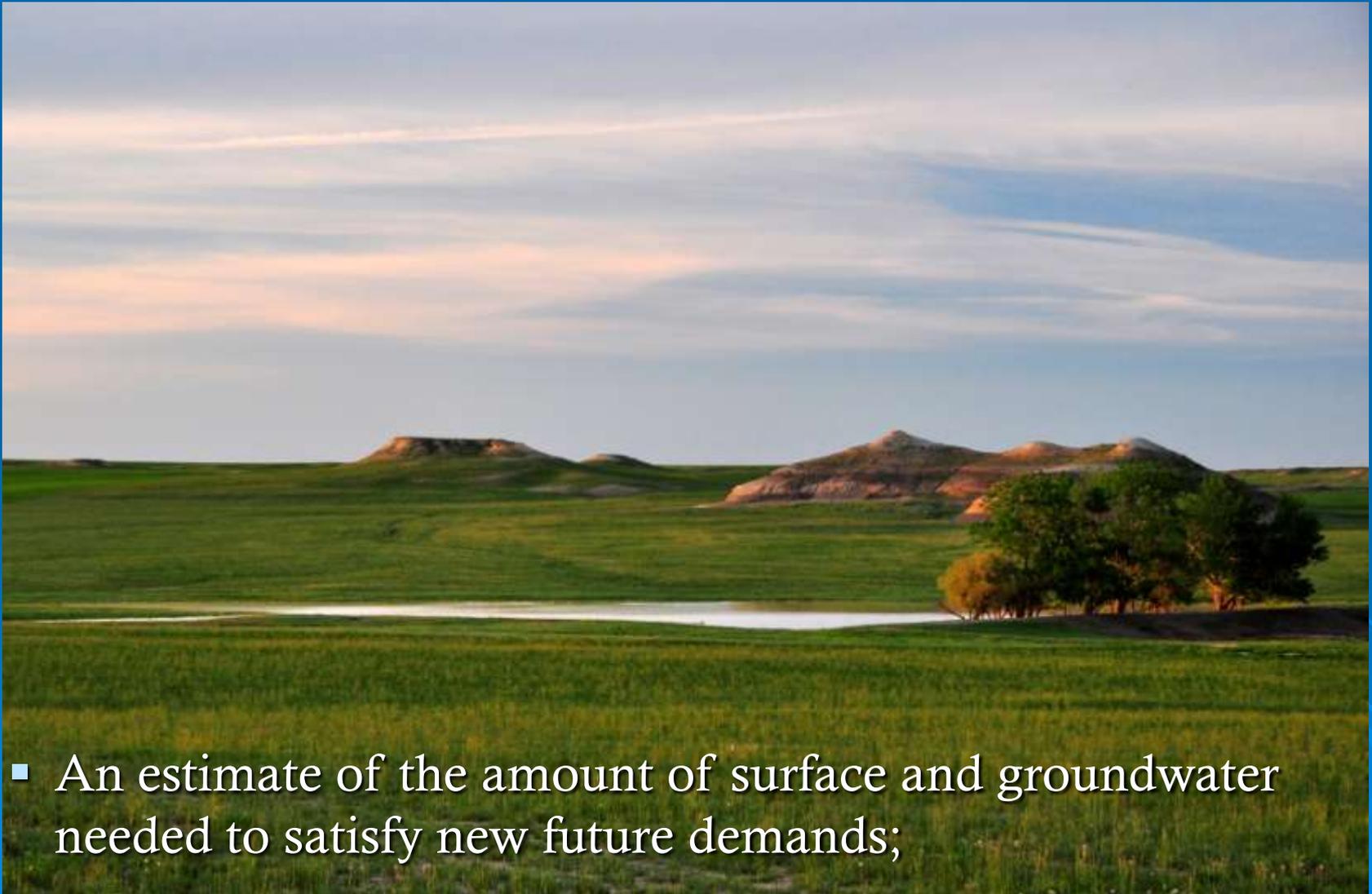
- 2009 – MT Legislature amends State Water Planning Statute (§85-1-203 MCA). Directs DNRC to Conduct:

- An analysis of the effects of drought and increased depletions on water availability;



Montana State Water Plan

- 💧 2009 – MT Legislature amends State Water Planning Statute (§85-1-203 MCA). Directs DNRC to Conduct:



- An estimate of the amount of surface and groundwater needed to satisfy new future demands;

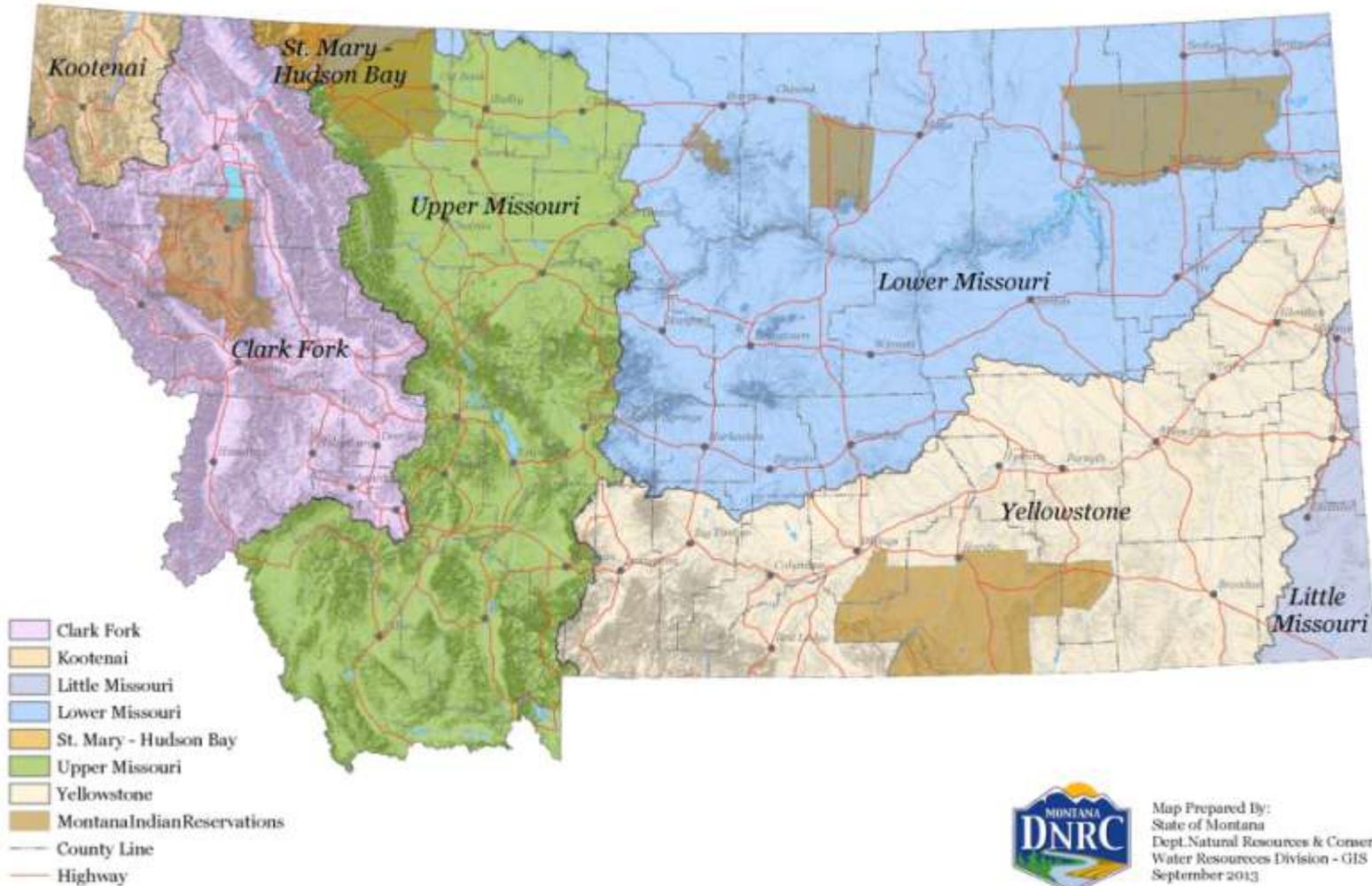
Montana State Water Plan

- 2009 – MT Legislature amends State Water Planning Statute (§85-1-203 MCA). Directs DNRC to Prepare:

- Proposals for the best means to satisfy existing water rights and new water demands.



2015 Montana Water Supply Initiative Major Water Planning Basins



Map Prepared By:
State of Montana
Dept. Natural Resources & Conservation
Water Resources Division - GIS
September 2013

Central Questions?



- 💧 What water is legally and physically available to meet existing and future needs?

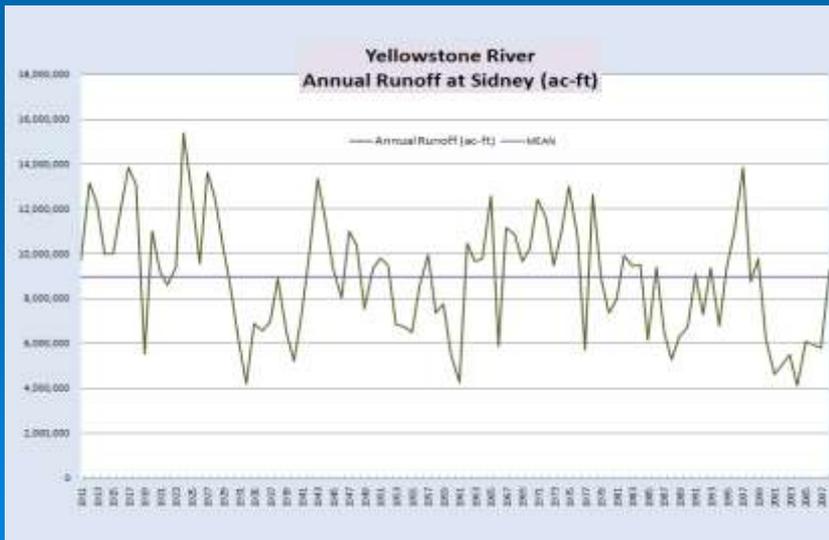
- 💧 What are Montana's current and future water resource needs?



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Fundamental Relationship:

$$(\text{WATER SUPPLY}) - (\text{WATER USE}) = \text{WATER AVAILABILITY}$$

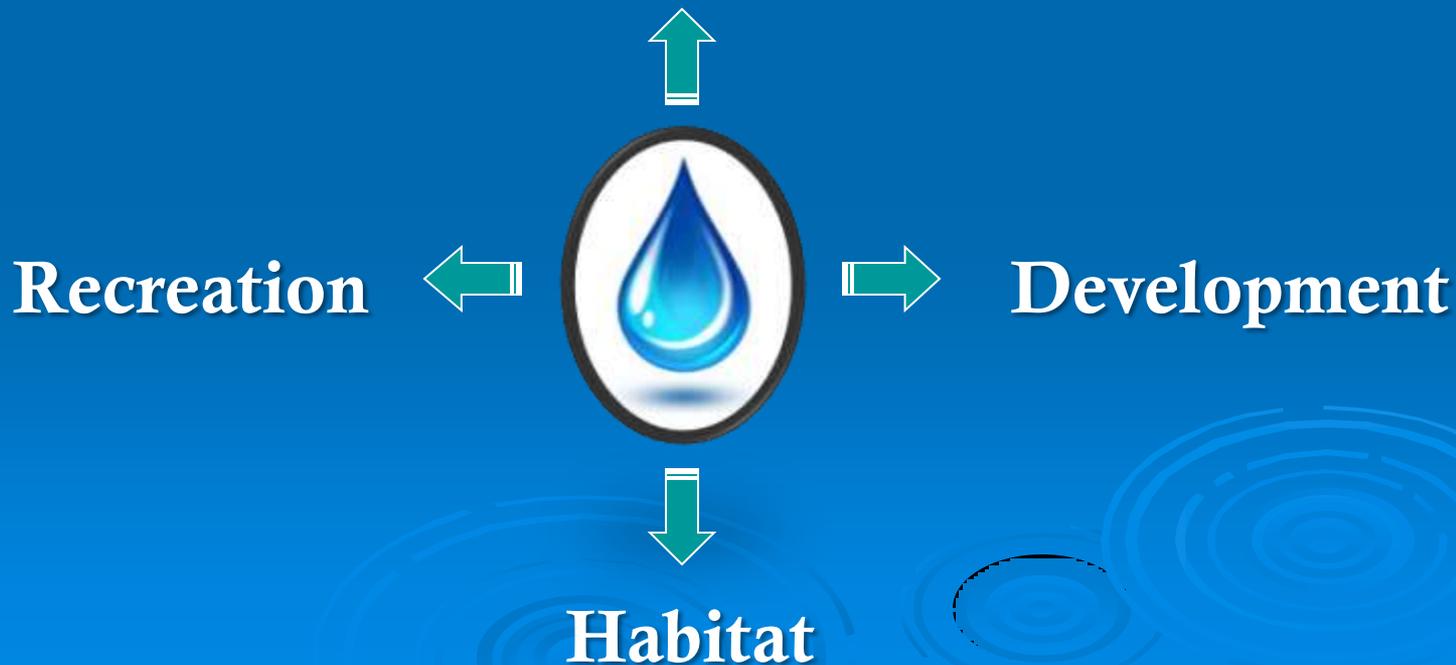


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Goal of Water Planning (Why Do We Plan?)

Answer: To Improve Water Availability

**Historic Appropriators
(Tribes, Agriculture, Towns)**



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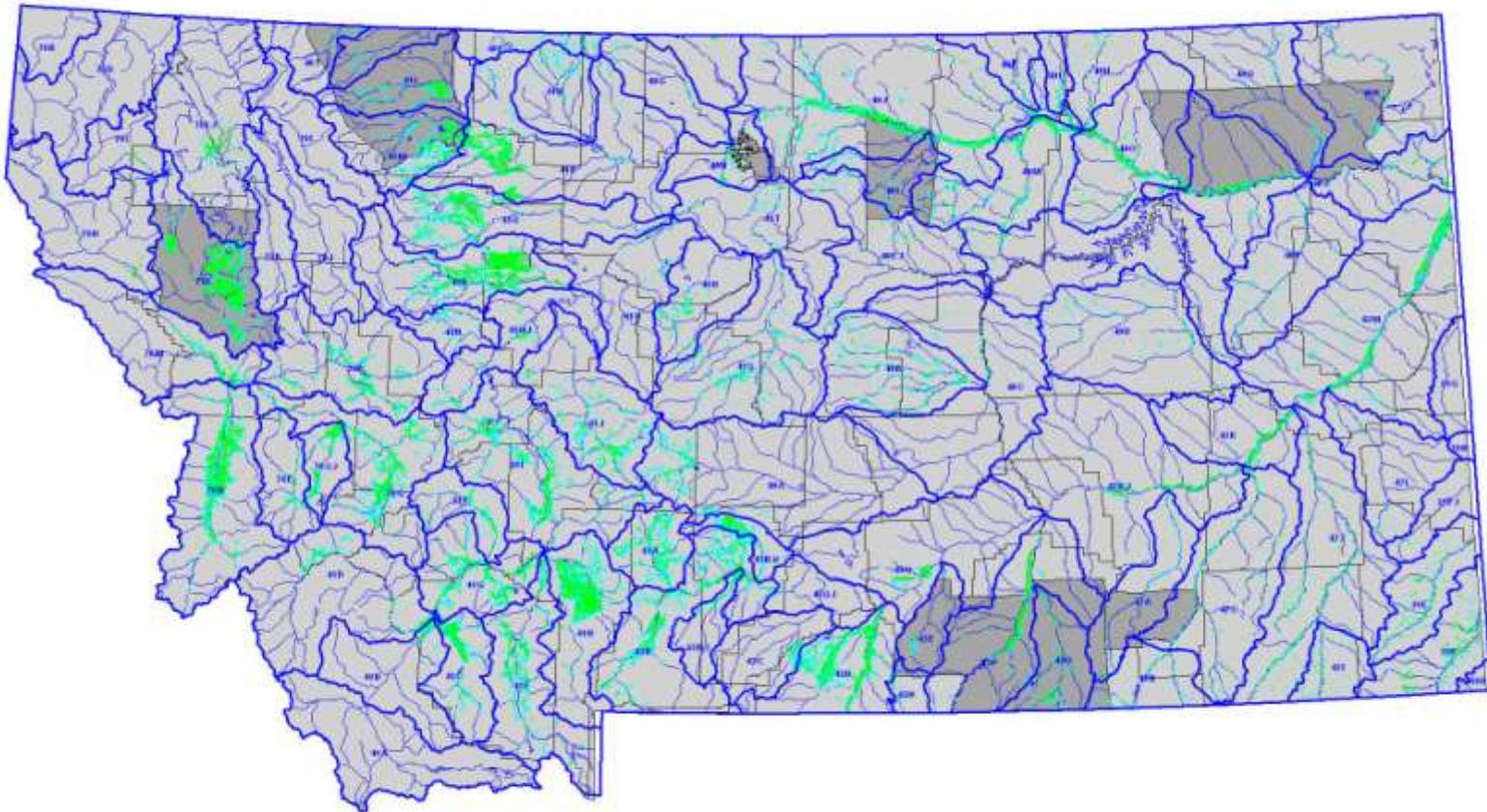
Future Demand?

(How much water will we use in the future?)

- 💧 Agriculture
- 💧 Residential
- 💧 Industry (Energy Production)
- 💧 Instream

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Irrigated lands in Montana ~ 2 million acres



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💧 Water Planning vs. Adjudication

- The water right adjudication process examines and resolves all pre-1973 claims filed by water users.
- Adjudication is an administrative process that establishes the order of claims based upon historic use. Adjudication does not address water supply.
- Planning enables water users to agree on the allocation of water in water short years.
- Planning benefits all water users through better information and improved communication about water supply and water use.

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Water Planning



Hay Production
and Pasture



Recreation



Stock
Watering



Photo credit: Emily Rens,
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks



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💧 Benefits of Water Planning:

Facilitates neighbor to neighbor agreements for sharing water.



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💧 Benefits of Water Planning:



- Non-Regulatory approach for avoiding regulatory oversight - endangered species

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💧 Benefits of Water Planning:

- Process for collecting data and public input for the development of policy recommendations.



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💧 Benefits of Water Planning:



- Process for implementing legislative goals and directives through non-regulatory measures.

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💧 Benefits of Water Planning:



- Process for accommodating changes in water use.

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💧 State Water Plan Objectives

- Document current water supply and demand in the Clark Fork, Yellowstone, and Missouri River basins.
- Estimate increases in demand for water over the next 20 years.
- Identify sources of water to meet increases in demand, while protecting existing beneficial uses.

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💧 Potential Outcomes

- Identification of drainages where high spring flows are available for appropriation.



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💧 State Water Planning Process

- Phase 1: Form Basin Advisory Councils (BAC's) Conduct issues scoping through public listening sessions. Identify data gaps and secure additional data.
- Phase 2: BAC's / DNRC work together in developing policy alternatives based upon issues scoping and data collection effort.
- Phase 3: BAC's / DNRC work together in developing policy recommendations for presentation to WPIC, EQC and 2015 Legislature. Publish final report.

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💧 Potential Outcomes

- Identification of drainages where high spring flows are available for appropriation.
- Identification of potential sources of mitigation water in closed basins.
- Identification of existing sources of water stored in federal reservoirs that are available for contracting.

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💧 Basin Advisory Councils

- 20 member citizen council geographically distributed with all major stakeholder groups represented.
- The BAC makes recommendations to DNRC on planning activities in each basin.
- BAC participates in issues listening sessions.
- BAC will assist DNRC in the development of policy alternatives based upon issues and data collection.
- BAC will assist DNRC in developing final policy recommendations to WIPIC and 2015 Legislature.

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💧 Water Planning Process Timeline

- Bid solicitation for Basin Facilitators / Coordinators - Winter/Spring 2013
- Form Basin Advisory Councils Spring - Summer 2013
- Conduct Listening/Issues Scoping - Fall 2013
- Publication of Issues Scoping Report - Winter 2013

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💧 Water Planning Process Timeline (cont.)

- Data Reporting / Alternative Development Winter 2014
- BAC / DNRC Develop Recommendations Spring 2014
- Prepare Draft Report for WIPIC /EQC Review Summer 2014
- Publish final report Fall 2014

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💧 Next Steps – Issues Analysis / Data Gathering

💧 Summary of Top Issues Identified in Yellowstone Process

- Water Availability
- Drought Readiness
- Enforcement/Protecting Senior Rights
- Water Quality
- Instream Flows
- Shifting Practices: Irrigation Technologies
- Future Allocations/Additional Rights
- Incentives and Support for New Technologies and Conservation
- Storage Capacities

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💧 Questions from the Council?

