

St. Mary & Milk River Water Management Initiative
Joint Status Report #13
June 4, 2010

Status

Members of the Montana and Alberta Joint Initiative Team (JIT) met by conference call to review and discuss the results of hydrological model runs completed since their February meeting. The Montana Team was located in Great Falls, Montana, and the Alberta Team was located in Lethbridge, Alberta. Team members reviewed results for the following options: Shared Alberta Milk River Storage Reservoir where Fresno Reservoir storage is 50,000 AF (Option 8f); Montana's Annual Balancing-Credit System Proposal (Option Series MT); and the Revised Modified 1921 Order with 100% Volume Cap (Option MO). Alberta's annual credit proposal from the February JIT meeting was not run. Alberta confirmed that this Proposal was withdrawn.

Team members agreed on a path forward that involves using a common sense approach to understanding the technical information. The co-chairs reported on a conference call with the International Joint Commission and the Alberta Team's meeting with Alberta's Ministers of Agriculture and Environment.

Background

The St. Mary & Milk River Water Management Initiative is being conducted under a Terms of Reference approved by Premier Stelmach and Governor Schweitzer in January 2009. Under the Terms of Reference, Montana and Alberta agree that the shared water of the St. Mary and Milk Rivers is an important resource to both jurisdictions and that there are opportunities for the two jurisdictions to work together to improve their timing and access to this shared water. Alberta and Montana have shared the water from the two rivers for 100 years, under Article VI of the Boundary Waters Treaty (1909).

The Terms of Reference establishes a twelve member Joint Initiative Team of local water users and government officials from both sides of the border. The Team has been asked to explore and evaluate options for improving both Montana's and Alberta's access to the shared waters of the St. Mary and Milk Rivers, and make joint recommendations on preferred options to both governments for their consideration and approval. A report containing the joint recommendations is due to both governments in the fall of 2010.

The Joint Initiative Team is co-chaired by Robert Harrison from Alberta Environment, and Anne Yates from the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. Other team members include representatives from the Milk River Watershed Council Canada, Oldman Watershed Council, Alberta Agriculture & Rural Development, the office of Montana's Lt. Governor, Blackfoot Tribe, Ft. Belknap Indian Community, and the Milk River watershed in Montana.