The Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation

Montana Highground Newsletter March 2026

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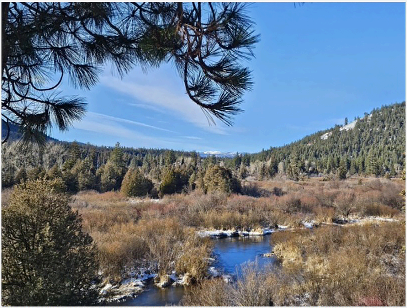


Winter snows lead to spring runoff in creeks, streams and rivers. Blue sky days are a good time for Montana communities to prepare for spring flooding. (Photo: Stream near Seeley Lake, Montana. By: Shylea Wingard)

The Montana Highground newsletter is a quarterly publication by The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). This edition highlights upcoming educational events and floodplain resources to prepare for spring flooding and guide development.

Visit the DNRC Floodplain Website

FLOODPLAIN NEWS

DNRC Responded to Historic December Flooding in Northwest Montana

The DNRC mobilized its floodplain team and regional engineers to provide coordination and support to local floodplain administrators, community officials, and local property owners. DNRC, along with cooperating partners, assisted Lincoln County, Libby and Troy with capturing high water marks and performing substantial damage evaluations (SDEs) while addressing property owner questions and concerns. Support for the impacted communities will be ongoing throughout 2026-2027 due to the increased need for floodplain permitting as project repair and rebuilding of roads, bridges, and streambanks continues.

Photo: Flooding and debris destroy a Lincoln County bridge. By: Peri Turk

It's A Wrap!

Nearly 150 floodplain professionals gathered in Great Falls, MT for three days of coordinated floodplain education, networking, and camaraderie. The Association of Montana Floodplain Managers (AMFM) Board worked throughout the year to organize the event, which included over 40 presentations addressing floodplain management and modeling techniques, plus a keynote address by nationally recognized floodplain trainer Del Schwalls, PE, CFM, who also presented an all-day workshop on "How to Complete the FEMA Elevation Certificate Correctly." Planning is already underway for next year's conference in Billings.

Floodplain awards and recognition were given to the following:

- Floodplain Administrator of the Year - Amanda Cooley, Powell County
- Friend of Floodplain - WWC Engineering
- Floodplain Program Ambassador - Headwaters Economics, Bozeman
- Local Floodplain Champion - Rolf Johnson, Belt | Nadene Wadsworth, DNRC
- Floodplain Service/Longevity Award - Lorie Bond, Malta
- Floodplain Rookie of the Year - Cindy Grover, Stillwater County
- Floodplain Appreciation Award - Jesse Haag and Lincoln County SDE teams
- "Steady State" Contractor of the Year - Morrison Maierle Engineering
- "Go with the Flow" Award - RESPEC Engineering

Visit the AMFM Website

Aging Levees Increase Flood Risk

Powerful atmospheric river storms and heavy rain across Washington, Idaho and Montana in December 2025 caused serious flooding across the region as levees overtopped and waterways overflowed. As storms intensify, levees can play a critical role in whether communities stay dry or flood. In the United States, levees hold back flood waters for over 23 million people and 7 million buildings worth $2 trillion in property value. (Source: National Levee Database) This is a serious responsibility for a flood control measure with an average age of 61 years. Read more about the history, impact, and regulation of levees in the article from *The Conversation* below.

Read more about U.S. Levee Infrastructure

National Weather Service 5-Day Significant Weather Flood Outlook Guides Flood Managers

The Significant River Flood Outlook is intended to provide a general outlook for significant river flooding. It can be used to predict and prepare for likely and possible flood events. The tool does not highlight small-scale events including localized and/or flash flooding or minor river flooding with minimal or no property damage.

Click to Explore the River Flood Outlook

Glendive, MT Considers $15M Levee Upgrade to Reduce Flood Risk

The City of Glendive partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Omaha District to study the local levee along the Yellowstone River for ways to reduce flood risk and improve life safety for the community.

Glendive has flooded 30 times since 1890 due to ice jams. Ice jams pose a significant threat due to levee overtopping when the channel flows are blocked and the river flood stage rapidly rises.

Completed in 1959, the West Glendive Levee experienced damaging floods in 1969, 1986, and 1994. The Bell Street bridge has been taken out twice and 30 people have lost their lives.The Corp presented its findings from the Glendive Flood Risk Management Feasibility Study in May 2025. Click to view the study and presentation shared with the public.

Glendive leaders have worked diligently on updating their FEMA floodplain maps and finding ways to mitigate flood risk and ultimately improve development and economic growth. Currently, the city is considering a $15 million levee project to repair and raise the levee three feet to prevent overtopping in a 100-year flood event. The Army Corps of Engineers would cover approximately 65 percent of the cost leaving the remainder (approximately $4.9 million) for the city to fund either by passing a local bond or applying for federal grants or funding.

Read More about the Proposed Levee Bond

Floodplain Training Events and Resources

WORKSHOP
TRAINING
DEVELOPMENT

Education, Training and Events

- **FLOODPLAIN BOOTCAMP**
  - Fridays, January 9 - May 29, 2026**:** a 1-hour weekly online training series to help learn basic floodplain management and prepare for the CFM exam.
  - Contact: Shylea Wingard, *shylea.wingard@mt.gov*

- **ADVANCED FLOOD RECOVERY TRAINING EVENTS**
  - April 28, 2026: Hill County, Havre, MT - City Complex Building
  - May 5, 2026: Stillwater County, Columbus, MT - Civic Center & Fairgrounds
  - May 7, 2026: Yellowstone County, Billings, MT
  - TBD: Wheatland County (4th week April)
  - TBD: Custer County (2nd week May)
  - Contact: Traci Sears, *tsears@mt.gov*

- **REALTOR FLOODPLAIN TRAINING EVENTS**
  - April 29, 2026: Hi-line/Milk River Realtors - Havre, MT
  - TBD May 2026**:** Helena Association of Realtors - Helena, MT
  - Contact: *shylea.wingard@mt.gov*

- **MONTANA SILVER JACKETS ANNUAL CONFERENCE**
  - May 6, 2026: Roosevelt Center, Red Lodge, MT (6-Hour event)
  - All agencies and partners invited
  - Contact: tsears@mt.gov for agenda

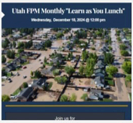
Montana Disaster and Emergency Services Training Updates

Each week Montana Disaster and Emergency Services (MT DES) sends out an email about upcoming training opportunities, exercises, and resources.To receive this information, email the training, exercise, education section supervisor for MT DES: betsy.ross@mt.gov. Key upcoming events delivered by the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) include:

- **April 14-15, 2026**: Emergency Operations Center Operations and Planning. Havre, MT
  - Register: https://my.teex.org/TeexPortal/Default.aspx?MO=mCourseCatalog&D=FP&C=MGT346&S=645

- **May 6, 2026**: Disaster Recovery: A Strategic Overview of the Public Assistance Process. Bozeman, MT
  - Register: https://teex.org/class/MGT481/

- *NOTE: You must log in or create a TEEX student account to register*


Utah FPM Monthly "Learn as You Lunch"
Wednesday, December 18, 2024 @ 12:00 pm
Join us for

Utah's "Learn as You Lunch" Workshop Series

Join the Utah Department of Emergency Management on the third Wednesday of every month for a floodplain workshop over your lunch hour (12-1 p.m.).

Access the on-line training via Zoom at: https://utah-gov.zoom.us/j/88436077657 | [utah.us7.list-manage.com]

The Utah Floodplain CAP team is always looking for more presenters and ideas! Reach out to McKenzie Goodenough, mgoodenough@utah.gov.

2026 ASFPM 50th Annual Conference

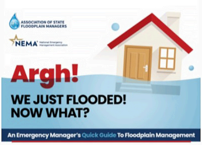
MAY 31 - JUNE 4, 2026
THE FRESH COAST LEGACY
ASFPM
MILWAUKEE, WI
2026 ASFPM CONFERENCE
Registration opens in February!

May 31 - June 4, 2026 | Milwaukee, WI

The Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) will host the 50th Annual National Conference on the shores of Lake Michigan on May 31 – June 4, 2026.

"The Fresh Coast Legacy: 50 Years of Floodplain Management" will celebrate flood risk reduction and community resilience by offering virtual and in-person learning opportunities. Registration is open.

Click for More Information


ASSOCIATION OF STATE FLOODPLAIN MANAGERS
NEMA National Emergency Management Association
Argh!
WE JUST FLOODED! NOW WHAT?
An Emergency Manager's Quick Guide To Floodplain Management

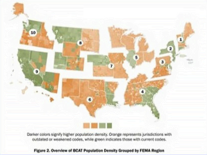
An Emergency Manager's Quick Guide to Floodplain Management

Emergency managers play a key role before, during, and after a flood to ensure community safety and resilience. This Quick Guide was developed to help emergency managers understand and implement floodplain management practices that will not only aid in immediate disaster recovery but also mitigate future risks.

Download the Guide

2025 Building Code Adoption Fact Sheets

Annual building code tracking sheets have been released for each U.S. state. Montana is located in FEMA's Region 8 and is designated as "green," which means all current codes are adopted.


10
8
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2
1
7
3
9
6
4
Darker colors signify higher population density. Orange represents jurisdictions with outdated or weakened codes, while green indicates those with current codes.

Figure 2. Overview of BCAT Population Density Grouped by FEMA Region

Access Building Code Adoption Fact Sheets

Grant Opportunities

MONTANA DNRC

DNRC Grant Opportunities

DNRC administers a wide range of grants and loans for Montana, assisting cities and towns, conservation districts, private landowners, and other groups in managing natural resource and floodplain issues at the local level. Visit the Montana DNRC Grants Submission Manager to learn more.

Floodplain Contacts

State & Local
Contact Information
CONTACT US

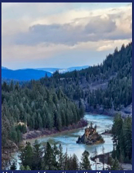
Click to contact your state and local floodplain managers

A flood damaged bridge in Lincoln County - December 2025. By: Peri Turk

DNRC Floodplain CAP Team

Traci Sears, DNRC Floodplain State Coordinator - National Flood Insurance Program
Ph. (406) 444-6654 | tsears@mt.gov

Shylea Wingard, DNRC Floodplain CAP Assistant/ Floodplain Planner
Ph. (406) 581-5254 | shylea.wingard@mt.gov



Unique rock formation in the Kootenai River near Troy, MT. By: Shylea Wingard

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