



# Water Reservation Program Through Time and Change



# AGENDA

- Program History
- 2024-2025 Changes
- Training Component
- New in Fall 2025
- Dates to Consider
- Q & A





# Important Water Years in Montana



1921. MT  
Supreme Court  
Decision



1933. State Water  
Conservation Board  
Formed



1967. State Water Plan  
Initiated



1973. State Water Act  
Passed



1974. Water  
Moratorium Act  
Paused

# Water Moratorium Act of 1974



After the Water Use Act passed in 1973, a substantial number of water use permits were submitted for large amounts of water from the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers.



This influx of interest necessitated a pause to evaluate water usage in the state and to reserve water for future consumptive uses, maintain minimum flow & quality thresholds.



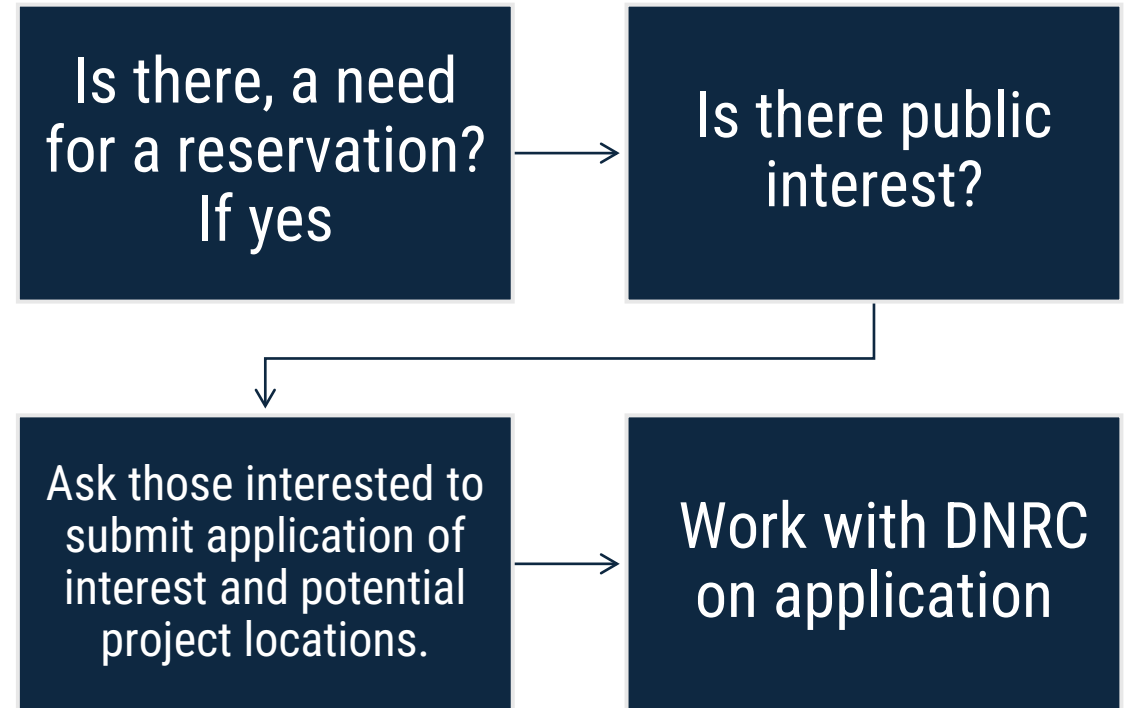
**This time-out gave qualified public bodies an opportunity to apply for a water reservation, too.**



# **A Water Reservation**

**is a Water Right that Serve a Public Need and Interest**

# Determining Interest Locally 1974



# Determining Feasibility



Technical Assistance provided by DNRC and consultants



Application submitted to Board of Natural Resources & Conservation



Public Notice, Objection Period observed



Testimony



BNRC decision on reservation





# Reservation Development



1976. Application for Reservation of Water Submitted for the Yellowstone River



1978. Yellowstone River Reservation Finalized



1982. Yellowstone River Basin Administrative Manual Developed



1985. Legislature initiated a water reservation process for the Missouri River Basin



1989. Application for Reservation of Water Submitted for the Upper Missouri River



1991: Application for Reserved Water Submitted for the Little & Lower Missouri River



1992. Upper Missouri River Basin Water Reservation Finalized. Priority Date/Time: July 1, 1985 at 8:00am



1994. Lower & Little Missouri River Water Reservation Finalized. Priority Date: Lower Missouri July 1, 1985 & Little Missouri: July 1, 1989



1995-1997: Missouri River Basin Administrative Manual Developed





# Guidelines That Followed

## First: Final Board Order

Granted the Water Reservation

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Sets Conditions of Appropriation

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Lists Order of Priority

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States Development Completion  
Year (now all in perpetuity)

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Provides Conclusions of Law

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## Second: CD Administrative Manual

Developed Program Manual

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Gives the Scope & Objective of  
Reservation

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Specifies Proposed Projects &  
Goals Approved in the Board Order

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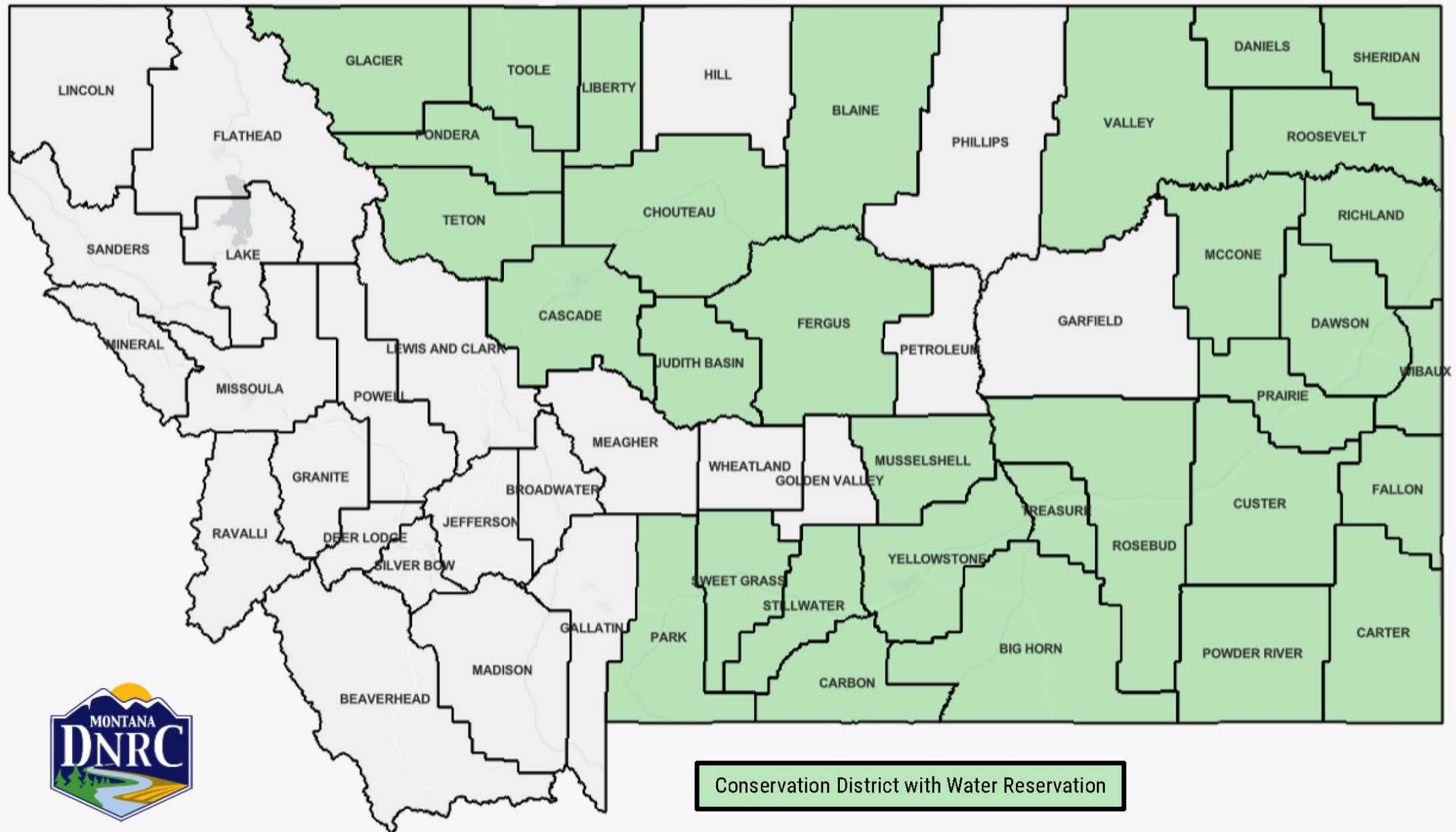
Establishes Administrative Rules &  
Procedures

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Created Forms

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# CONSERVATION DISTRICT WATER RESERVATION PROGRAM





**2024-2025**

**PROGRAM CHANGES**



# New Forms & Training Guide

## Resource Documents

### Water Reservation Forms

- Form 101 Reserved Water Use Application (word) (fillable pdf)
- Form 102 Reserved Water Use Authorization (word) (fillable pdf)
- Form 103 Water User Annual Status Report (word) (fillable pdf)
- Form 104 Change Application (word) (fillable pdf)
- Form 105 Change Authorization (word) (fillable pdf)
- Form 106 Notice of Completion (word) (fillable pdf)
- Form 106A Notice Completed Not Authorized (word) (fillable pdf)
- Form 106B Instructions (word) (pdf)
- Form 107 Objection (word) (fillable pdf)
- Form 108 Extension of Time Application (word) (fillable pdf)
- Form 109 Notice of Transfer (word) (fillable pdf)
- Form 109A Portioned Transfer Addendum (word) (fillable pdf)
- Form 110 Complaint Form (word) (fillable pdf)
- Form 111 Request to Terminate a Water Reservation (word) (fillable pdf)
- Form 112 Addendum to Notice of Change to Form 618 (word) (fillable pdf)

### Additional Forms

#### CD Use Documents

- Annual Report to DNRC (word) (fillable pdf)
- CD Water Reservation Assistance Request Form (word) (fillable pdf)
- CD Water Use Application Checklist Tracker (word) (fillable pdf)
- CD Water Reservations and Ownership Transfers (pdf)
- Ownership Templates (word)
- Revocation and Termination Letter Templates (word)

#### Public Notice



CONSERVATION DISTRICT WATER RESERVATION

*Training Guide*



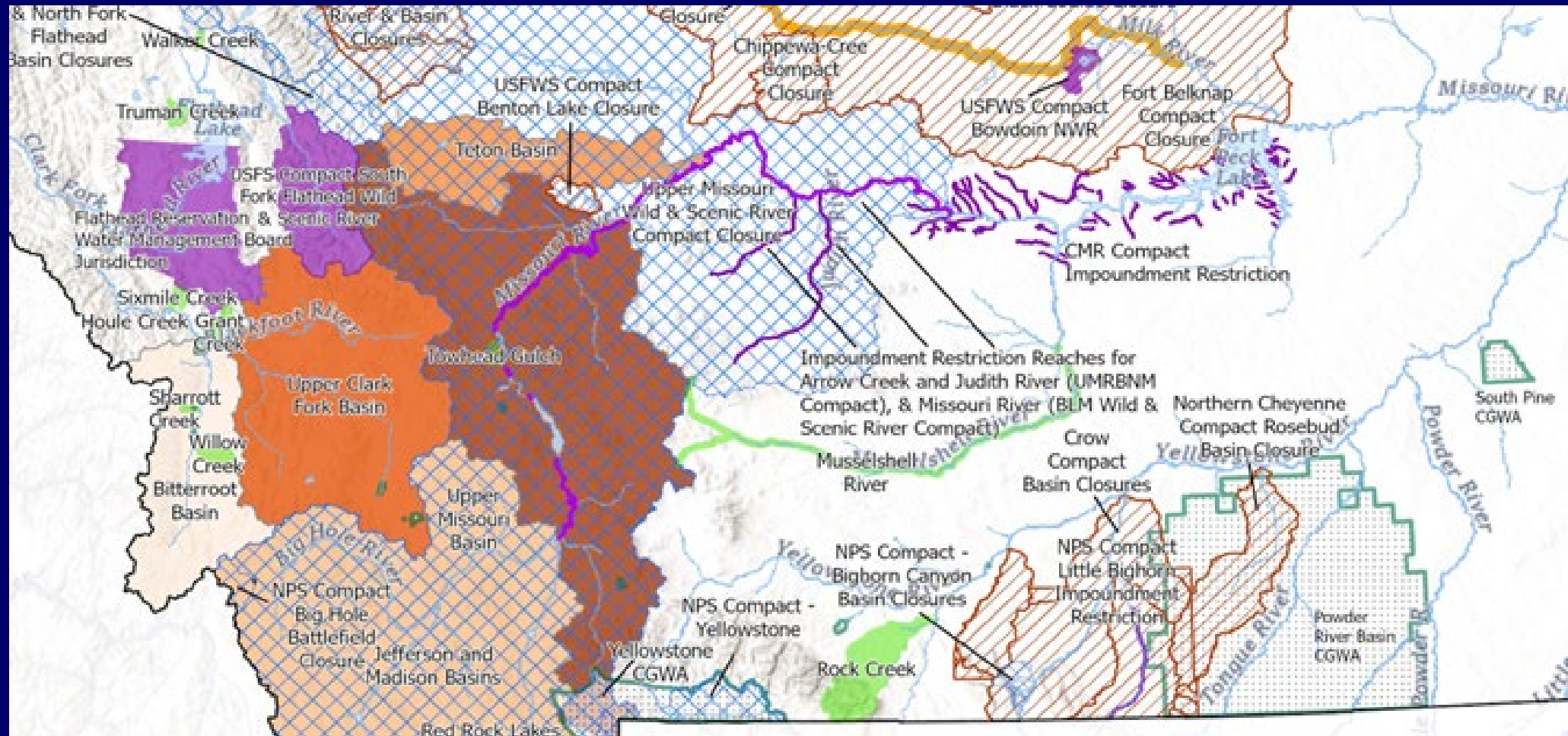
Trainings



# Montana Basin Closures

Link: [Montana Water Rights Compacts Map Journal](#)

## Understanding Potential Impacts to CD Water Reservations





# What else happened?

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Three firms were contracted to provide technical assistance to conservation districts.

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Senate Bill 357 passed and signed into law April 17, 2025. This moves the reservation perfection deadline in the Upper Missouri River Basin into perpetuity.

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Junior water right called by MT FWP in August 2025 for Park and Sweet Grass CD authorizations on the Boulder River to Big Timber.

# Today's TRAINING



# Water Users Report

Every reserved water authorization states water users are responsible to report water usage to the conservation district each year.

Reference:

- Individual authorizations
- Form 103 for more information

What do you look for?

- Actual flow measurements
- If water was or wasn't used that year
- Period of use
- Must be signed by authorization holder (if different from water user)



**These reports are kept as part of the conservation district record.**



# Annual Report to DNRC

Review and report activity for  
calendar year

## Annual Program Report

- Did the conservation district receive any new applications?
- If approved, how much water was allocated?
- Add recent year data to overall reservation data
- How did you develop your program this year?



**This report is submitted to DNRC by December 15 each year.**

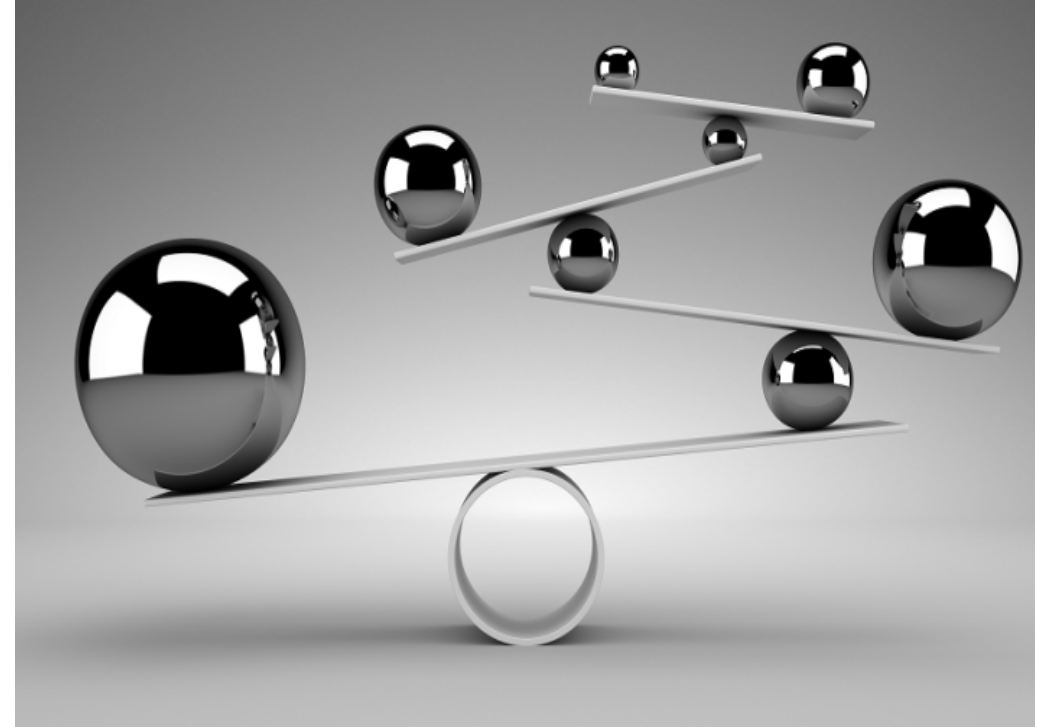
# Let's Look at Water Balances

## Yellowstone & Missouri River Basins

In a water reservation, both are equally important, and neither can be exceeded.

- All water reservations have volume in acre-feet of water
- Most but not all water reservations provide flow in cubic feet per second

Review your water reservation for more details.



# Yellowstone River Basin

Priority Date/Time: December 15, 1978, at 4:18pm





# Upper Basin Yellowstone River

Volume in Acre-Feet

227,949 AF  
COMBINED

35,888 AF ALLOCATED  
OVER TIME

**15.74% ALLOCATED**

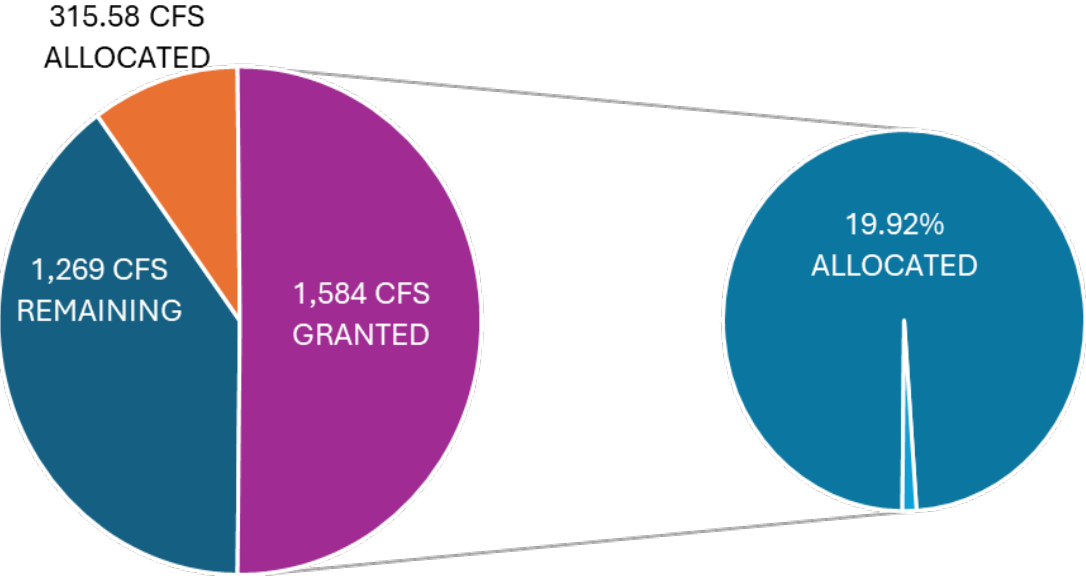
192,061 AF or  
**84.26% REMAINING**

Conservation District	Granted	Allocated	Volume	Percent Allocated
Park	64,125	1,247.6	62,877.4	1.95%
Sweet Grass	46,245	7,483	39,832	16.18%
Stillwater	16,755	1,905.8	14,849.2	11.37%
Carbon	22,676	1,424.3	21,251.7	6.28%
Big Horn	20,185	16,974.65	3,210.35	84.10%
Yellowstone	57,963	6,852.7	49,858.3	11.82%
Total AF	227,949	35,888.06	191,878.9	15.74%



# Upper Basin Yellowstone River

Flow in Cubic Feet Per Second



Conservation District	Granted	Allocated	Remaining	Percent Allocated
Park	445.9	6.63	439.27	1.49%
Sweet Grass	363.4	74.9	288.5	20.61%
Stillwater	122.1	19.87	102.24	16.27%
Carbon	130.7	10.53	120.17	8.06%
Big Horn	143.8	141.93	1.87	98.7%
Yellowstone	378.2	61.56	316.64	16.28%
Total Flow	1,584.1	315.58	1,268.69	19.92%



# Lower Basin Yellowstone River

Volume in Acre-Feet

548,629 AF  
COMBINED

78,710 AF ALLOCATED  
OVER TIME

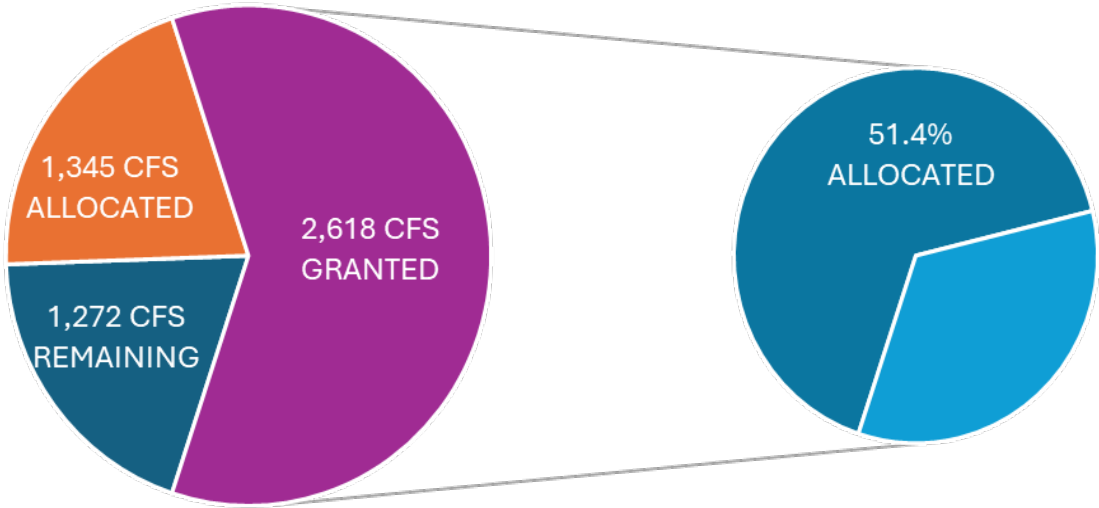
**14.15%**  
ALLOCATED

469,737 AF or  
**84.26%**

Conservation District	Granted	Allocated	Remaining	Percent Allocated
Powder River	13,680	8,620.7	5,059.3	63.02%
Treasure	18,361	2,165.4	16,195.6	11.79%
Rosebud	87,003	4,486.6	82,516.4	5.16%
Custer	28,478	14,919	13,559	52.39%
Prairie	68,910	9,279	59,631	13.46%
Dawson	45,855	5,525	40,330	12.05%
Richland	45,620	5,435	40,185	11.91%
Little Beaver	12,773	1,483.24	11,289.8	11.61%
Total Volume	548,629	78,710.23	469,736.78	14.35%

# Lower Basin Yellowstone River

Flow in Cubic Feet Per Second



Conservation District	Granted	Allocated	Remaining	Percent Allocated
Powder River	706	643.09	62.9	91.09%
Treasure	118.6	19.93	98.67	16.8%
Rosebud	540.7	83.94	456.76	15.52%
Custer	Not provided	259.37	n/a	n/a
Prairie	567.5	74.01	493.49	13.04%
Dawson	330.8	44.53	286.27	13.46%
Richland	354.2	38.24	315.96	10.8%
Little Beaver	Not provided	182.33	n/a	n/a
Total Flow	2,617.8	1,345.44	1,272.36	51.4%

# Missouri River Basin

Upper & Lower Missouri Priority Date: July 1, 1994

Little Missouri Priority Date: July 1, 1989





# Upper Missouri River

Volume in Acre-Feet

148,824 AF  
COMBINED

4,416 AF ALLOCATED  
OVER TIME

2.97 %  
ALLOCATED

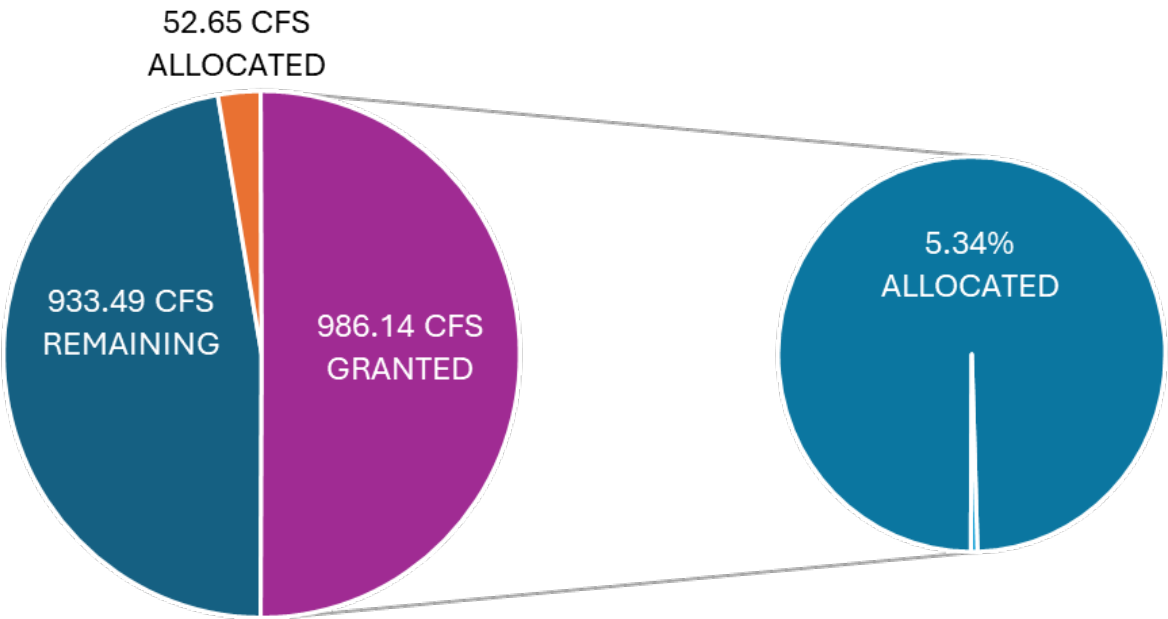
144,408 AF or 97.03%  
REMAINING

Conservation District	Granted	Allocated	Remaining	Percent Allocated
Chouteau	33,123	2,481	30,642	7.49%
Fergus	3,914	301	3,613	7.69%
Glacier	1,271	0	1,271	0%
High Plains	9,314	0	9,314	0%
Judith Basin	731	0	731	0%
Liberty	2,002	0	2,002	0%
Lower Musselshell	600	0	600	0%
Pondera	1,975	494	1,481	25.01%
Teton	3,253	1,140	2,113	35.04%
Toole	641	0	641	0%
Valley	92,000	0	92,000	0%
Total Volume	148,824	4,416	144,408	2.97%



# Upper Missouri River

Flow in Cubic Feet Per Second



Conservation District	Granted	Allocated	Remaining	Percent Allocated
Chouteau	218.8	34.78	184.02	15.9%
Fergus	33.7	2.75	30.95	8.16%
Glacier	11	0	11	0%
High Plains	71.9	0	71.9	0%
Judith Basin	6.04	0	6.04	0%
Liberty	13.5	0	13.5	0%
Lower Musselshell	90	0	90	0%
Pondera	15.1	4.6	10.5	30.46%
Teton	22	10.5	11.5	47.82%
Toole	4.7	0	4.7	0%
Valley	499	0	499	0%
Total Flow	986.14	52.65	933.49	5.34%



# Little & Lower Missouri River

Volume in Acre-Feet

157,426 AF  
GRANTED  
COMBINED

36,638 AF  
ALLOCATED OVER

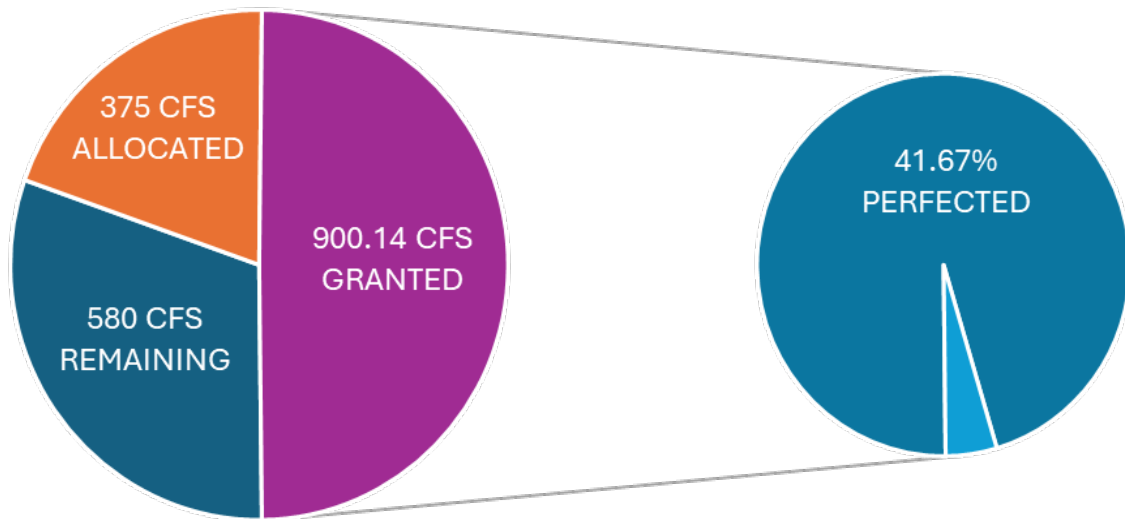
23.97 %  
ALLOCATED

120,697 AF or 76.03%  
REMAINING

Conservation District	Granted	Allocated	Remaining	Percent Allocated
Blaine	10,936	0	10,936	0%
Carter	4,684	0	4,684	0%
Daniels	3,047	0	3,047	0%
Little Beaver	1,030	0	1,030	0%
Liberty	310	0	310	0%
McCone	14,299	6,222.3	8,076.7	43.5%
Richland	25,349	11,229.3	14,119.7	44.3%
Roosevelt	73,115	9,444.1	63,579.4	12.92%
Sheridan	15,479	9,742	5,737	62.9%
Valley	7,668	0	7,668	0%
Wibaux	1,509	0	1,509	0%
Total Volume	157,426	36,637.7	120,696.8	23.27%

# Little & Lower Missouri River

Flow in Cubic Feet Per Second



Conservation District	Granted	Allocated	Remaining	Percent Allocated
Blaine	Not provided	0	n/a	n/a
Carter	Not provided	0	n/a	n/a
Daniels	Not provided	0	n/a	n/a
Little Beaver	Not provided	0	n/a	n/a
Liberty	0.84	0	0.84	0%
McCone	99.5	89.69	9.8	90.14%
Richland	186.9	122.83	64.1	64.72%
Roosevelt	558.8	107.6	451.2	19.26%
Sheridan	Not provided	54.97	n/a	n/a
Valley	54.1	0	54.1	0%
Wibaux	Not provided	0	n/a	n/a
Total Flow	900.14	375.09	580.02	41.67%



# Montana Conservation Districts Water Reservations Explorer



## Welcome to the Montana Conservation Districts Water Reservations Explorer

You have accessed the Water Reservations Explorer for the State of Montana Conservation Districts.

Water reservations authorized by the State of Montana are water rights held by a Conservation District for future agricultural beneficial use.

This Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) provided geospatial information system (GIS) database enhances general access to view publicly noticed project areas that shaped each conservation district water reservation boundary. The data provided within shares original authorized and newly added project areas. The water reservation database is continually updated. Development changes project occur and if necessary, when the project is complete. It is intended for informational purposes only.

NOTE: Conservation districts may not process or grant applications for water reservations in closed basins. Refer to the [Basin Closures](#) document and [map](#).

For more information about water reservations, please contact the appropriate conservation district for more information. Questions/Comments: Please contact your local [Conservation District](#).

Click outside this splash page to enter application.

### Legend

Conservation District Water Reservation Boundaries and Rights

Conservation District Water Reservation Boundaries

County Boundaries

County Boundaries

Turn Layers Off and On

# New for Fall 2025

## Montana Conservation Districts Water Reservations Explorer

# DATES TO CONSIDER

November 2025: Questionnaire for 10-year report sent out

January 15, 2026: Questionnaire due

- DNRC WRD will review and assess if the objectives are being met

September 15, 2026: Report due to Water Policy Interim Committee

Jan-May 2027: 70<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session







Are there any Questions?





**Contact:**  
**Mary Hendrix**  
**[Mary.Hendrix@mt.gov](mailto:Mary.Hendrix@mt.gov)**  
**406-431-2639**

*Thank you*