

**DRAFT W2ASACT MEETING NOTES**

Meeting on July 9, 2024, 10 am to 12 pm

Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, 1539 11<sup>th</sup> Ave, Helena, Montana  
Second Floor CM Russell Conference Room and Zoom**Zoom Meeting participants:**

1	Abby Weimer, DNRC	14	Ki-Ai Pierson, Great West Eng
2	Anna Miller & Denise Cook, DNRC	15	Krista Lammers, DNRC
3	Autumn Coleman, DNRC	16	Kylee Hughes, DNRC
4	Becky Anseth, Commerce	17	Lexi Laird, DNRC
5	Ben Rigby,	18	Lindsey Glastetter, DNRC
6	Brittany Trushel, DNRC	19	Melissa Downing, DNRC
7	Christina, WET	20	Nichole Simmons, DNRC
8	Coleen O'Rourke, DNRC	21	Nina Denny, DNRC
9	Erica Thomas, LFD	22	Rachel Gemar, DNRC
10	Heidi Anderson Fohnagy, DNRC	23	Rick Duncan, DNRC
11	Heidi Fleury, DNRC	24	Shawna Swanz, DNRC
12	John Camden, MRW	25	Sonja Hoeglund, DNRC
13	Katherine Certalic, DNRC	26	Susan Brurud, DNRC

**At DNRC:**

Anna Miller, DNRC  
Denise Cook, DNRC  
Jason Fladland, DEQ  
Jake Goettle, DEQ  
Steve Troendle, USDA-RD

Mike Abrahamson, DEQ  
Rebecca Shaw-Quinones, Interstate Eng  
Lindsay Volpe, USDA-RD  
Greg Montgomery, DEQ

**Acronyms:**

AIS – American Iron & Steel  
APE – Advanced Pump & Equipment  
ARPA – American Rescue Plan Act of 2021  
ARRA – American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009  
AWWA – American Water Works Association  
BABA – Build America, Buy American  
BIL – Bipartisan Infrastructure Plan  
BOI – Montana Department of Commerce, Board of Investments  
CARDD – Conservation & Resource Development Division, DNRC  
CDBG – Community Development Block Grant Program, MT Department of Commerce  
CMRWA – Central Montana Regional Water Authority  
COVID-19 – Corona Virus 2019

DEQ – Montana Department of Environmental Quality  
 DNRC – Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation  
 GWE – Great West Engineering  
 HDR – HDR Engineering  
 HUD – Housing and Urban Development  
 IAC – Infrastructure Advisory Commission (ARPA)  
 IUP – Intended Use Plan  
 KLJ – Kadmas Lee & Jackson Engineering  
 LFD – Montana State Legislative Fiscal Division  
 MAP – Midwest Assistance Program  
 MEPA – Montana Environmental Policy Act  
 MISC – Montana Invasive Species Council  
 MRWS – Montana Rural Water Systems  
 MCEP – See TSEP  
 RATES – Rural & Tribal Environmental Solutions  
 RDG – Reclamation Development Grant Program, DNRC  
 RRGL – Renewable Resource Grant and Loan Program, DNRC  
 SRF (DNRC) – Wastewater State Revolving Fund Loan Program  
 TSEP – Treasure State Endowment Program, MT Department of Commerce – Now MSEP  
 USDA - RD – United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development  
 WASACT – Water & Solid Waste Action Coordinating Team, Montana  
 WMCC – Western Montana Conservation Commission (from Flathead Basin Commission and Upper Columbia Conservation Commission)  
 WRF (DNRC) – Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Loan Program

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### **Call to Order, Sign-in Sheet, Agenda Changes**

Anna Miller called the scheduled meeting of the Water, Wastewater and Solid Waste Action Coordinating Team (W2ASACT) to order at 10:03 am, on Tuesday, July 9, 2024. Anna went over the agenda and asked if there were any changes. She asked those in attendance to introduce themselves. The draft minutes from the April 9, 2024, meeting, which were distributed to those present at DNRC and posted to the WASACT website, were approved and adopted by those attending with no revisions. There were 9 attendees in the room. According to the Zoom report, there were a total of 28 participants on the meeting.

### **Renewable Resource Grants – Autumn Coleman**

Our staff is reviewing all applications received in the recent RRG and RDG grant cycle. Autumn noted that a map and list can be found on the RRGL website. She said there is a gallery of our grants on our website on the RRGL page. We received 75 RRGL applications for \$9M, 7 Renewable Resource loans for \$36.7M, 7 RDG applications for \$7.1M.

Autumn noted that these applications must go through House Bill 6, 7 or 8 for approval. She put a link in the chat to check for information or the status of an application. For notification, you can sign up for GovDelivery emails at the bottom of the web page. Melissa Downing is working on the RRGL review process.

Emergency Grants: Nina Denny replaced David Larson who retired. Autumn said there are a handful of applicants and a few more who are interested in applying for grant manager positions left by staff moving to other positions. Sonja Hoeglund is retiring after 30 years with DNRC. Lindsay Volpe left DNRC so we are recruiting for her position. Please be patient with our staff as we fill these vacancies.

### **Becky Anseth – Dept. of Commerce**

The Montana Coal Endowment Program had 44 applications, 38 for water and wastewater projects and 6 for bridges. There will be more information on Commerce's website. Applications are under review with staff. They are using external consulting engineers. Public information and public scoring and public analysis will be available in November. Planning grants have another open cycle as there was available funding. If communities are looking for PER Capital Improvement projects. It's first come, first serve. There is over \$1M available. Commerce has modified how grants are set up – the cycle changed – now up to \$40K up from \$15K. There is \$22K left for Emergency funds. We've had a few staffing changes.

### **Jason Fladland, DEQ Technical Services**

Jason works in the Public Water Supply Bureau and works in Capacity Development. He graduated from MSU Northern and was a sanitarian with Lewis and Clark County and he worked as a superintendent with the City of Billings and then Great Falls. Jason helps with program issues through technical help. His responsibility is the central to eastern part of Montana. Mike Cropp handles western Montana. Mike Cropp was hired at DEQ and works with public water supply. He also provides Technical Assistance.

### **Montana Rural Water Conference - John Camden**

John noted changes to his staff and introduced Ben Rigby who came to MRW from the City of Helena. Julie Allen will be retiring the end of July. Christine Meday starts July 16. The 2025 Montana Rural Water Systems conference will be March 12-14.

John said there are 12 programs at Montana Rural Water. His office has 14 employees now. Ben Rigby said he has worked with Jason Fladland. Ben is excited to be here and is looking forward to working with the WASACT group. He noted that Roger and 3 of the circuit writers are working on lead service line inventories.

### **USDA Rural Development**

Steve Troendle thanked John for his years of service. Steve announced the hiring of Lindsay Volpe who replaces Laura Sattler. RD is also hiring in Kalispell and Bozeman. They will have to rearrange the case load. He will update as new people are hired. Following an administrative mandate, RD has boxed up records for storage. The records can be recalled in 3 days.

Steve reported that RD was \$4.5 million short at the start of the year in funding requests. On hand are \$11 million in applications. They have \$8 million in applications and \$1.4 million in funds. He added that the Farm Bill can help with the backlog of applications every 5 years. Many RD projects were set aside when ARPA funds were available. If you have RD funds, get your project bid. He suggested planning for the next biennium.

### **SRF Program**

Jake Goettle with the drinking water program announced that it is fully staffed. Wade Salyards is new with the program. The fiscal year 2025 grants have been received. The base is \$5 million, supplemental \$23 million. There was 1 lead service line project application received to date.

The IUP is done. People can still apply as we can amend the IUP. Anna stated the interest rate is still 2.5%. And loan terms can be longer than 20 years if community is disadvantaged.

Mike Abrahamson announced that his program is fully staffed.

He said they are starting to see ARPA project bids come up short. Because of this, applicants are applying for more funding in the SRF program. DEQ has new engineers, so things are moving along. Check back on funding as projects can fall through or not move forward.

Greg Montgomery said there is funding for Emerging Contaminants for smaller communities or disadvantaged communities. There is \$18 million waiting on EPA official approval. They have technical assistance for Lead Service Line inventories – apply at Dept. of Commerce. HB 5 has funding for schools with lead in drinking water lines. Apply on the website. There are 1,065 water systems required to do the survey and 135 have completed their survey. The survey deadline is October 2024. Anna suggested we let communities know that there is help available with surveys and inventories.

### **ARPA Update**

Autumn announced a ‘management “hacks” training on July 10 from 10 to 12. Progress reports are due July 22. Claims could take longer due to Fiscal Year End.

Seth Shteir has accepted a position with Military Affairs. See Michelle McNamee or Shawna Swanz for questions or assistance with his projects.

Rebecca Shaw-Quiones asked about the minimum match required for ARPA grants and Autumn Coleman suggested she contact an ARPA grant manager.

Anna asked for confirmation on deadlines. ARPA funds need to be obligated by the end of 2024. The deadline to have projects under contract is the end of August. Funds spent by December 31, 2025. ARPA ends on December 31, 2025. Then the state needs to file its report with the federal government.

### **Saint Mary's Siphon Failure**

Anna briefed all on the flooding and failure of the siphon at Saint Mary's this June. She said there is a public meeting at 4 o'clock and they will announce the status of the project. This failure affects water from Saint Mary and the Milk River. There is damage due to the failure and the subsequent flooding. The US Bureau of Reclamation is the lead on the project to replace the siphons. We are working with the Milk River Joint Board of Control (MRBOC) and have a commitment with the US Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). A link was put in the chat for the last public meeting. Anna suggested going to the MRJBOC website to see photos of the siphon failure.

Steve Troendle asked about the percent of match for irrigators and Autumn replied 48% for project beneficiaries. Steve added that he wants to go through the numbers. Steve will check to see if Rural Development can help irrigators on the Saint Mary project.

### **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)**

Anna Miller said there is still BIL money. There are communities grant programs for certain problems. Administration is done by the EPA.

### **Regional Water Update – Rick Duncan**

**Dry Prairie Rural Water Authority (DPRWA)** - The Fort Peck Tribes are in the process of completing on-Reservation pipeline construction projects., with the final phase scheduled to be finished during 2025. They are planning on construction of several rural fill stations (water depots) and are in negotiations with the Bureau of Reclamation on the planning, design, and construction details, including costs. Dry Prairie has several ongoing pipeline construction projects along the norther tier of the project in Valley, Daniels and Sheridan counties. Completion of all remaining project segments in these areas is anticipated in 2025. DPRWA recently received notice of approval from

Reclamation of \$9.8 million in funding for The Pines pipeline project in southern Valley County; this will be Dry Prairie's last construction project.

**Rocky Boys / North Central Montana** – The Chippewa-Cree Construction Corporation (CCCC) is currently working on Segments 4 and 5 of the Core pipeline, between the regional water treatment plant (WTP) and Box Elder. Dewatering process for the high groundwater area of these segments seems to be moving along well.

**North Central Montana Regional Water Authority (NCRMWA)** is readying documents to bid the Havre pipeline project, which will connect the City of Havre.

The Authority's engineers are beginning preparation of plans and specifications for the Hill County Water District pipeline project segment, which will probably be bid over next winter.

Several proposals are under consideration by the engineers and the Authority's Executive Committee for alternatives to building the entire 11 MGD Phase II of the regional WTP at an estimated cost of \$200 million, including use of improvements to the City of Shelby's wellfield to supply communities on the western side, as well as a smaller version of the WTP Phase II, with a hybrid model, in the interest of saving money for the Federal, State and Locals.

**Dry Redwater Regional Water Authority (DRWA)** is still cooperating with Reclamation's designated contract firm for the purposes of completed a revised feasibility study for the regional water system. Additionally, DRWA is preparing plans for more pipeline construction in Richland County sometime in the next year.

**Central Montana RWA – Musselshell-Judith Regional Water System** – Phase 1 Ubet Wellfield-to-Harlowton has achieved final completion status. Phase 2 to Roundup, with its 3 sub-phases, is due to be completed by December 2025.

The Authority is planning to hire a 2<sup>nd</sup> OM&R staff person/system operator. Phase 4 Roundup-to-Melstone plans and specifications are currently under review by Montana DEQ; the Authority expects to be able to bid this phase in the very near future. Phase 3A to Lavina and Broadview is in advanced planning stages, with a tentative plan to construct the segment in 2025. Phases 3B and 3C will bring water to the new Deadman's Basin-Shawmut Water District and to the Town of Ryegate in 2026 or 2027.

Progress on the Ubet wellfield – Well N0. 5 has been completed to a depth of (2990) feet, about 700 feet of which is Madison Formation, Well No. 4, which was drilled to a dept of about 2300 feet, was pump-tested earlier at around 1400 gpm; water chemistry results came in with very high levels of sulfates, so the drilling company, the engineering firm and the authority are all contemplating a change order to drill that well deeper.

**MRWS Conf – Workshops**

Mike Abrahamson is now in charge of communications.

**Standard Documents** - Jake Goettle with DEQ is now heading this up. He asked who is on the committee. There is Ryan with RD, Nina with DNRC and Becky with Commerce. Jake said that updates are needed. Steve suggested we review what we have now then the committee can make updates.

**Website – Melissa Downing**

Let Melissa know of changes or need something posted on the website.

**Congressional Update - None**

Anna noted that Senator Jon Testor is working the funding for the Saint Mary's siphon failure.

**Krista Lammers – WMCC**

WMCC is working on grant application guidelines. They received a \$7 million EPA grant for water and septic leaching projects. There will be a 30-day comment period on the program guidelines. WMCC has 4 competitive programs. Resident owned systems; connecting to existing sewer system; putting in storm water educational gardens and green storm water programs. Visit the website for more information. September is the next commission meeting. Autumn mentioned the area west of the continental divide can apply for grants. Krista said it also includes projects to help empty septic tanks.

**Susan Brurud – Commerce**

Susan mentioned an Infrastructure Report Card. She is working with Lexi Leffler from WET on the report card. They are looking for reviewers before July – let her or Lexi know if you are interested. Anna asked if it was through June 30. Susan it is a collaborative effort of all up to this point. This time we are looking at wastewater improvements. On this one, it is Jan to Dec 2023. Let us know of errors or omissions. Anna asked when the last report was completed and Susan said 2018. The next one is due Oct 8, 2024.

**End of updates**

Anna thanked all those who attended. The next meeting is tentatively set for Tuesday, October 8, 2024. We have the first floor Montana Conference room reserved.

Anna reminded all of the upcoming Legislative in session in January of 2025.

Meeting adjourned at 11:35.

Minutes taken by Denise Cook, reviewed by Anna Miller, and will be reviewed and approved/adopted at the WASACT meeting on October 8, 2024.

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