



Quarterly meeting of the Water, Wastewater and Solid Waste Action Coordinating Team

Date: Meeting on January 13, 2026, 10 am to 12 pm

Location: Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation, 1539 11th Ave, Helena, Montana
First Floor Montana Conference Room and Zoom

Call to Order: W2ASACT Chair Anna Miller called the meeting to order AT 10:02.

Roll Call: Anna asked those present to introduce themselves.

In the room:

Anna Miller, DNRC
Ben Rigby, MRWS

Denise Cook, DNRC
Josh Rickman, DNRC

Nicole Hallsten, DNRC

Via Zoom:

1	Abby Ritz, AE2S	16	Krista Lammers, DNRC – WMCC
2	Abby Weimer, DNRC	17	Kristen Jordan, DNRC – WMCC
3	Anna Miller and Denise Cook at DNRC	18	Kitty Schmid, GWE
4	Autumn Coleman, DNRC	19	Lance Goodman, MAP
5	Becky Anseth Dept of Commerce	20	Maureen Connor, Town of Phillipsburg
6	Bobbie DuBose, DNRC	21	Melissa Downing, DNRC
7	Casey Lewis, DNRC - WMCC	22	Michelle McNamee, DNRC
8	Craig Erickson, GWE	23	Mike Abrahamson - DEQ
9	Coleen O'Rourke, DNRC - ARPA	24	Nikki Rogers, MRWS
10	Galen Steffens, Commerce	25	Samantha Treu, DNRC
11	Heidi Fleury, DRNC - WMCC	26	Sandie Koenig, DEQ
12	Julie Hoffbauer, M-M	27	Shawna Swanz, DNRC - ARPA
13	Kassandra A Quint, Interstate Eng.	28	Stephanie Crider-Pridemore, Commerce
14	Katherine Certalic, DNRC	29	Will Meyer, MAP
15	Ki-Ai McBride, GWE	30	Zen Parry, City of Ronan

Approval of Minutes: The minutes from the October 14, 2025, meeting, which were previously posted on the website and distributed to those in the room and added to the Zoom chat, were adopted with no revisions.

Guest Speaker: Therese Hartman, MT Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program (MSGHCP):

Erin Reather with the MSGHCP began a slideshow which illustrated the habitat and breeding patterns of Sage Grouse. Erin displayed maps showing this information. She covered program consultation, the MCA, Montana's Governor's Executive Order and why the program is necessary. Erin demonstrated where to find information on the website and she showed how to log in and developing a project. To see details like leks and habitat areas, you need to have an account. A key takeaway is that any money that comes into the program funds conservation. Erin encouraged those beginning projects to check with the program early to avoid delays. She shared the website: sagegrouse.mt.gov. You can also email Sagegrouse@mt.gov for support. Or call (406) 444-6340 and contact a team member for assistance.

Topic of Discussion: Uniform Application Updates:

Autumn Coleman began presenting on the Uniform Application website. She covered the addition of accessibility features. There were also updates to the PER and tools added for ease of use. Autumn demonstrated the table of contents and where to find specifics. You can also download a Word format version of the application. Autumn showed how to access the forms needed with the application.

Program Updates:

Resource Development Bureau, DNRC

Michelle McNamee discussed Emergency Grants which can help with flooding mitigation. The Non-Point Source (NPS) program has projects implementation grants for stream bank restoration or erosion control. The other side of that program helps with municipal sewer connection grants for municipalities to offset the cost of individuals connecting to community sewer service. Michelle said those grants will be opening February 11 and go through the end of March. Reach out to Melissa Downing with questions.

Michelle noted that Planning Grants closed last fall and we awarded in December. If you have questions on Planning Grants, reach out to Katherine Certalic. The next Planning Grant cycle will open about the same time this year, so this summer, check our website for the information to apply.

The RRGL grant application cycle will open February 4, 2026, and close May 15 at 5 o'clock. You will be able to go into Submittables and start your application. Please note, we are still getting our guidelines together. In the next couple of weeks we will have our website updated with the guidelines and supplemental information. Michelle suggested working on the Uniform Application part. She will be scheduling outreach sessions starting the first week of February. Stay tuned and watch our website for updates and ways to book a session. We will also send out info via GovDelivery. If you

are getting W2ASACT emails, then you will get those on RRGL. If not, please [sign up](#) to receive them or contact one of us.

Montana Rural Water Systems

Ben Rigby reminded us that the Montana Rural Water Conference is in Billings this year. The is Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, March 23, 24 and 25 at the Billings Hotel and Convention Center. The W2ASACT funders workshop will be Monday, March 23 from 8:15am to 12:30pm due to logistics of scheduling. We are using an app called "Whova" to sign up for classes. The agenda is on our [website](#). Ben said other than the conference, we are working on trainings for people who can't travel to Billings, and we are trying to assist the communities affected by flooding, like Libby. If there are folks say in Western Montana who need training, let us know as we can accommodate you.

USDA Rural Development

Steve Troendle mentioned a way to possibly help communities who may be struggling with getting all the pieces of their project together. Once we are done with the W2ASACT workshop, we could set up meetings with the community personnel, consultants and funders along with DEQ regulators to have a brainstorming event with the W2ASACT group, in person. If we could have a few communities that would want this opportunity to have a one-on-one it could help to sort out things that are delaying their project.

Steve reported that RD although having a turbulent last year, had a \$6.7 million loan allocation. They obligated 12 loans for a total of \$13.6 million. RD's grant allocation last year was \$1,355,000. We obligated \$17,943,000. Fiscal Year 2025 was a good year for RD. RD's allocation for this year is roughly the same with \$6.7 million in loans and \$1.3 million in grants.

Steve added that RD is funded for the whole year. And the US Department of Agriculture's budget or the entire fiscal year passed. He said they have about \$14 million in their Emergency Community Water Assistance Grants (ECWAG). Steve said he reached to Libby about flooding damage and they had other sources of funding. If anybody in northwest Montana knows of infrastructure impacts due to flooding, let us know. That program is for water, not wastewater. They can also look at public buildings damaged by flood waters.

Steve said RD has a new disaster assistance program and he will share more as he learns about it. They have their 1% loan program funded at \$15 million for the entire nation. That goes into communities that meet certain economic distress levels. RD has done three of these loan in the state for the five counties that are persistent poverty counties: Bighorn, Blaine, Roosevelt, Golden Valley and Glacier. Steven mentioned a couple other funds that can help with projects. Reach out with questions.

Steve touched on income surveys as some are looking at MHI (Median Household Income) and there have been some disagreements. Before communities start into doing a survey, they need to check the boxes with the funders they will use so when they get done, they won't have to repeat that effort. Becky with Commerce, agreed to communicate with the agencies early on and if you have questions on income levels in an area or community, reach out to Commerce.

State Revolving Fund Program

Wastewater Program: Mike Abrahamson said his office is in the middle of their EPA audit. He said things are going well for both programs. He has been evaluating some documentation and program requirements and wanted to bring up signage requirements. Not all projects have signage requirements. He asked how important is it to have signage at a project. We would like signage to be optional. He asked if other programs like RRG have requirements. RD does require signage which Steve confirmed. Becky said Commerce does require signage and the requirements have recently changed from a 4' by 8' plywood sign to a user-friendly, cheaper to produce sign. The new requirement is vinyl sign that can be purchased off Amazon. Becky said Commerce will get some info out to the group on the new signage requirements.

Mike asked if the group wants to incorporate signage requirements into the Uniform Application or the 0900 standard specification or special provisions for funding agencies. Does that need to be incorporated in there? Steve said yes. Galen with Commerce added that the requirements are for any of our construction projects, not just MCEP so that includes CDBG as well as our historic preservation or main street projects. Galen said the signage information is identifying a funding source, whether it's bed tax or historic preservation grant funding. Sandie added that DEQ has the RD sign, but we may need a third sign to accommodate multiple funders. Galen said Commerce has pivoted away from the bigger signs that included co-funding and logos. Becky added that yes we could potentially have two signs. One standard that is compliant. Becky explained that Commerce has been looking at options.

Anna suggested there by a separate meeting to go over signage and make sure any changes are included in the 0900 section. Mike agreed.

Mike suggested we look through the programs and look at the uniform environmental assessment and who needs to provide those. SRF, RD and CDBG do provide them, but what about other programs. We may need a meeting to compile all funders' requirements. Steve will have Ryan collaborate and include Commerce. Becky named Rosie Goldick as the CDBG coordinator. Mike and Sandie agreed to be on that subcommittee also.

Drinking Water Program: Sandie Koenig will be working on DEQ's IUP in the spring or early summer. If you have projects you want to submit a survey on to get on the list of the IUP engineers, please do so. Also every 7 years we are required to re-up our

contract for Technical Assistance. Sandie said through their set-asides for the Drinking Water SRF, that 7 years has passed so we will be putting out an RFP so watch for that to come out.

On the Drinking Water SRF, Sandie asked the engineers when they are filling out those applications and completing the budgets, to please do not assume the forgiveness amount. DEQ has to assess it on our end so put the SRF money you want assuming no forgiveness at the start.

Regarding the IUP's and getting on the list, Becky said that is one consideration that MCEP takes into the analysis of projects. She suggested to the consultants to get on the list early and soon so that in our documentation review, we can confirm the projects on the lists are eligible. Michelle said the same applies to the RRGL program.

ARPA

Shawna Swanz said that with the December 31, 2025 deadline having passed, the team is busy closing out many of those water and wastewater infrastructure projects. We were able to offer extensions to about 36 projects.

Montana Department of Commerce

Becky Anseth said Commerce awarded five new CDBG projects. The new funding cycle will be in early May. We are targeting May 6 so we are a week and a half ahead of the RRGL program. That May 6 date is not final. She mentioned changes in guidelines, the Uniform Application as well as some updates to MCEP as well as the PER. This information will be available on the W2ASACT website. The specific MCEP application will be on the Commerce website in the next couple of weeks and open until early May. There will be a free application training hopefully mid-February. More information will be coming out in our newsletters that are broadcast by Commerce. Reach out to us with questions.

Becky added that Commerce also has emergency funding available. Those are \$30,000 grants. Galen noted that MCEP planning grant cycle closed the beginning of December and we are in the rank and review process now. We should have recommendations for approval out in the next couple of weeks. Our CDBG planning round 2 application cycle closes this Friday.

Regional Water Program, DNRC

Shawna Swanz reported the Regional Water Authorities are in their quarterly meeting cycles so they continue to work on their projects. Grant agreements have been processed to help fund the administration of the rural water authorities. Two applications were received for construction projects. We have Central Montana and Dry Prairie meetings this week and Shawna hopes to attend.

W2ASACT Workshops

Autumn Coleman said the workshop information is on the W2ASACT website. If you look under W2ASACT meetings, you will see the Funder's Workshop. If you cannot attend in person, you can register to attend via Zoom. Autumn covered the workshop agenda. As Steve mentioned we'll have the infrastructure clinic where three different communities will present on their infrastructure issues. The panel in each room will discuss technical assistance and some funding while brainstorming ideas and opportunities for the community. The communities will be selected ahead of time so if you have a community that is interested, please contact Autumn. We will send out info and invites via GovDelivery.

Autumn reminded the group to reach out to Shawna Swanz to make updates on the Funders Booklet. That way we can have the updated version available ahead of the Montana Rural Water Conference in March.

Lynette asked if we will be reaching out to communities or is this something they should apply for? Autumn said we are looking at communities that are really struggling, either with what to do, or funding, or just some extra assistance. Steve added that we should ask the DEQ regulators if they have thoughts on any communities that are struggling to comply. Autumn suggested reaching out to her if they have a community in mind. We will let the communities know that they are selected and give them a format for the presentation. We want those communities and their engineers to talk through the issues.

Autumn asked if we have updated to the website to let her know. Autumn reminded us that the funders workshop is Monday March 23 at 8am.

Congressional Update

Anna said for the EPA the House passed a funding bill for the EPA. We hope it gets to the Senate in the next week or so. Congress is trying to get some agencies' funding bills passed.

The next W2ASACT meeting is scheduled for April 14, 2026, here in the Montana Room at DNRC.

Autumn added an update from WMCC. All of the grant funds for WMCC have been allocated. They may have more funds available at some point. If you are interested, visit their [website](#) and contact their grant team. They also have a newsletter.

Anna thanked all for attending.

January 13, 2026 Meeting link: https://mt-gov.zoom.us/rec/share/32nSFOCFz9xGmqkuQa0Pk8H4-xFa9jLk9l9GS46j9JcVRgzmcTpXfSsG6f8nSlxu.919NTyyBru_OugAY [mt-gov.zoom.us]

Passcode: A6FuV\$k*

Adjournment at 11:02.

Next Meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday January 13, 2026, in the first floor Montana Conference room at DNRC.

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 Law
 BOI – Montana Department of Commerce, Board of Investments
 CARDD – Conservation & Resource Development Division, DNRC
 CDBG – Community Development Block Grant Program, MT Department of Commerce
 CIFA – Council on Infrastructure Financing Authorities
 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
 M-M – Morrison - Maierle
 MRWS – Montana Rural Water Systems
 MCEP – See TSEP Montana Coal Endowment Program (formerly Treasure State Endowment Pgm.)
 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
 SWEFC – Southwest Environmental Finance Center at the University of New Mexico
 TSEP – Treasure State Endowment Program, MT Department of Commerce – Now MCEP
 USDA - RD – United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development
 WASACT – Water & Solid Waste Action Coordinating Team, Montana
 WMCC – Western Montana Conservation Commission
 WRF (DNRC) – Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Loan Program