



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

Date: Meeting on July 14, 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 10:05.

Roll Call: Anna asked those present to introduce themselves.

In the room:

Anna Miller, DNRC
Gallen Steffens, DOC
Mike Abrahamson, DEQ

Denise Cook, DNRC
Josh Rickman, DNRC
LaNette Diaz, Interstate Eng

Shawna Swanz, DNRC
Julie Hofbauer, M-M

Via Zoom:

1	Abby Weimer, DNRC	17	Heather Reeves (CND846)
2	Amy Deitchler, Great West Eng.	18	Katherine Certalic (CNC759)
3	Ann Kulczyk (CN3515)	19	Lindsey Harada (cca467), Commerce
4	Anna Miller (DNR - The Montana Room)	20	Logan Swanson, DNRC
5	Autumn Bahr, DNRC	21	Maureen Connor, Town of Philipsburg
6	Becky Anseth, Commerce	22	Mia Belting, DNRC
7	Ben Rigby, MRWS	23	Neal Murray, DEQ
8	Billie Lee, Lake County	24	Nicole Hallsten, DNRC
9	Bobbie DuBose, DNRC	25	Nikki Rogers, MRWS
10	Chelsea Dodd-MRWS	26	Rachel Gemar, DNRC
11	Christalle Thompson (CND913), DNRC	27	Rosie Goldich, MT Dept. of Commerce
12	Coleen O'Rourke, DNRC	28	Samantha Treu, DNRC
13	Craig Erickson - Great West Engineering	29	Sandie Koenig, DEQ
14	Denise Cook (laptop in room), DNRC	30	Stephanie Crider, MT Dept. of Commerce
15	Devin Beal (MAP)	31	Tucker Colvin (SW EFC) (Tucker Colvin)
16	Galen Steffens, Commerce		

Approval of Minutes: The minutes from the April 14, 2026, meeting, which were previously posted on the website and distributed to those in the room, were adopted with no revisions.

Guest Speaker: Autumn Bahr with DNRC RDB and Becky Anseth with Commerce:

Autumn Bahr began discussion on RRG project list from the web site. As she shared her screen, she went over the procedure of funding projects once the applications were received. Autumn also showed the 18 Reclamation Development projects. Autumn also posted links to these lists in the meeting chat.

Gallen Steffens with the MT Department of Commerce covered the funding process for CDBG grants under House Bill 11. Gallen handed out a sheet with status updates on HB 11 funded projects, which include water, wastewater, stormwater and bridge projects. This October the MCEP project list will be out.

Anna Miller asked the difference between RRG and RDG grant requests.

RDG projects help mitigate the impacts of mining and mineral extraction to protect the environment and the citizens of Montana.

Crucial state need must be demonstrated to protect natural resources that could be lost without this project. High hazard dams, drought and channel migration zone or CMZ mapping are some of the categories meeting crucial need.

RRG projects that measurably conserve, manage or develop or preserve our renewable resources.

These need to have a measurable renewable resource benefit and a public benefit, which would include health and safety, economic benefits and recreational.

Anna cited the City of Fairfield whose water supply has been affected by drought, which impacted students and staff during the last couple weeks of school as porta-potties and disposable utensils, etc. had to be used.

Gallen noted Tara Green is at Commerce and is the one who administers the CDBG planning grants as well as the MCEP planning grants.

Program Updates:

Resource Development Bureau, DNRC

Autumn Bahr summarized grant programs at DNRC's CARD Division. She covered the purpose and documents needed to apply for grants. Autumn said that we always have emergency grants open until those funds are expended. We also have our private grant program, which is open and ongoing. Those applications are generally for landowners to replace their septic systems. We will have another irrigation development grant

application cycle later this fall. Our non-point source had an application cycle and awarded those funds, which were split between stream restoration type projects as well as municipal connections.

Katherine Certalic said the next renewable resource planning grant cycle runs from July 13 to August 21. That program helps provide funding for government entities for professional and technical services necessary to produce high quality RRG grant applications that lead to those projects that Autumn talked about earlier, which focus on conserving, managing, developing or protecting Montana's renewable resources. This is the step before your project grants.

Katherine noted that the program guidelines had an update but there are not many significant changes. In the application, in the appendices, there are the differences between technical memorandums and PERs and when is the best time to select funding for those types of projects and the documents for the project. The cycle is open now until August 21, 2026, with award letters out two to three months after the cycle closes. Katherine will post a link to the document in the meeting chat so you can see where to apply and read the program guidelines.

Katherine said our technical assistance opportunities are technically not grants. These were designed to assist local governments that don't have an established relationship with an engineering firm, or if they have been unsuccessful in applying for planning grants in the past. We assess your application and then connect you with an engineering firm that can help you apply for a planning grant. This is a good way to get on track to get infrastructure funding. Those applications are open on a rolling deadline until funds are expended. Katherine put links in the chat on planning grants and technical assistance opportunities.

Autumn shared her screen to show a couple new updates to the planning grant application guidelines. The updates included highlighting the asset inventory category to show the need for communities to inventory their infrastructure and work on asset management plans as well as expanding the resources in the guidelines for groundwater monitoring and hydrologic assessment applications.

Montana Rural Water Systems

Ben Rigby said his staff is helping operators with the summer demand and doing some source water plans in the Anaconda area. There are no trainings scheduled until fall. Ben said his office wrapped up their EPA program work the end of June.

They are setting up what they call a "sampling roadshow" probably in the fall in eastern Montana and in the spring, western Montana. They will explain sampling for PFSA and lead and copper. They are working with Neil Murray and Greg Montgomery at DEQ on setting up those trainings. Ben suggested checking MRWS web site for the training calendar.

The Summer Montana Rural Water board meeting is next week so Ben has been preparing for that meeting. The next Montana Rural Water Conference is scheduled for March 23, 24, and 25th. 2027 in Billings.

USDA – Rural Development

Anna noted that Steve Troendle is in training this week. RD is coming up on their fiscal year end, which is September 30. Anna added that RD has had funds allocation deadline so we will see what their new allocation of funds will be after September 30, 2026.

State Revolving Fund Program

Mike Abrahamson said his office put together their intended use plan for the state fiscal year 2027. Their CAP grant applications were submitted to EPA and hopefully we will be awarded those funds prior to the end of September. Mike noted that the Clean Water SRF program saw one of its biggest years, in terms of dollars obligated to projects that are under construction. The \$80 million in loans is double what we typically see most years.

Mike noted the Clean Water Needs Survey is due to the EPA every four years. He asked if the projects on the MCEP HB 11 handout are accompanied by some sort of PER or if that is something DEQ could get access to easily. Rebecca Ridenour will be designated to that role, and it would help her to have access to the wastewater PERs. Gallen Steffens said they will figure something out to give Rebecca access to those PERs at Commerce. Gallen asked about the timeframe and Mike said they will start the survey process on January of 2027. Gallen said that Beck Anseth would be the contact person at Commerce and Lindsey Harada is her infrastructure coordinator so she can help with access to the data. Anna asked Autumn about the PERs in the RRG applications and Autumn said we can get that into Mike. Again, just the wastewater data is needed. LaNette Diaz with Interstate Engineering and Julie Hofbauer with Morrison-Maierle also offered to share data to help with the survey.

Sandie Koenig commented on the clean water survey saying it is completely different than drinking water. It is not the funding agency specifically but rather capturing the needs of the state. Sandie does not need the same information for her survey. We are what is called an “opt-out state” and she only has to report one system, which is Billings.

Sandie said her office just submitted their intended use plan to EPA and have almost 30 project surveys to add to their project priority list. Sandie said her office applied for the base supplemental grants with EPA and we may not get those until September. Jake Miller starts August 3 with the Drinking Water program and will be based out of the Missoula office with Becca Beam. Jake has a lot of drinking water experience, so we are thrilled to have him.

ARPA

Shawna Swanz said there are a handful of grants for which we are finalizing ARPA reimbursements. We did allow until September 30 on some of these projects to get draws in to DNRC. We are working on a big records management project, so we have the information needed for the Federal Government for the December 31, 2026, deadline to report.

Shawna mentioned a website update which is a dot map showing all the ARPA grants. Shawna said the map is under the Awards tab on water and sewer infrastructure part of the website. Autumn added a link to the map in the meeting chat. On the map, it shows whether it was a minimum allocation, competitive, irrigation or RWA grant. If you click on the dot for a community, it shows the name of the project and details like amount awarded and a cost breakdown for that project.

Anna added that ARPA was a big project for staff, and we appreciate everybody working so hard to get things done and meet the deadlines. Over \$450 million was spent on water and wastewater projects in Montana.

Bi-Partisan Infrastructure Bil (BIL)

Anna referred to the 11 by 17-inch spreadsheets on blue paper. The first is for drinking water systems and the second for wastewater systems. These are the loans made in fiscal year 2026. Anna said we had \$137 million in drinking water funding. She noted the \$70 million between our forgiveness loans and our "B" loans. Some projects had to have another loan from RD. Then we had money for emerging contaminants which is really helping communities with unregulated contaminants. Also money from RD, Army Corps of Engineers, CDB Grants, Montana Coal Endowment Program grants, RRGL, and Regional Water. We were able to leverage funds to get work done and it's amazing.

Anna continued by noting the \$187 million in funding for wastewater projects. The SRF loans were approximately \$80 million for that and again, we had contributions filling that gap between MCEP, RRGL, ARPA, CBDG, RD and Army Corp. It was a tremendous effort by everybody. If you still have disbursements, get those to the State of Federal agency administering the grant or loan.

We still have one more year on the BIL funds which will finish up our funding for drinking water and wastewater. There is still loan forgiveness so get your projects in.

Shawna added that we are capturing the amount of match that was put into ARPA at the time the grant closed. Many projects are continuing with more match. We are capturing that number as well so we will get a good picture of the overall financial boom to the State of Montana.

Regional Water Program, DNRC

Shawna Swanz is learning much about the systems. They are all currently very active. **Fort Peck Dry Prairie** in the northeastern corner has a couple of short pipeline projects going – one south and one north of their main infrastructure. They are waiting on Congress on some verification of continuing funds from US Bureau of Reclamation.

Dry Redwater is the newest system. Working out of Sidney and around the city, they have a short distribution project. They are working on getting grant funds to look at possibilities for that system. They are reviewing five scenarios but have not been authorized by Congress as a regional water authority. Hopefully we can get some state funds to help with the project. It is a large area and many residents have very bad water.

Central Montana regional water starts north of Harlowton. Melstone and Roundup are now receiving water and moving south from Lavina into Broadview, where they put in a new water tank and distribution system to receive water. Then they will go north into Shawmut and Deadman's Basin.

Rocky Boy's - North Central Montana – The tribe is partnering with the authority. They have a core and a non-core system and as Anna mentioned, there is a great need for water in that north central area of Montana. Fairfield's wells are not producing and several other communities are in the same predicament. They are reviewing alternatives right now and have had several asks from communities: can we join the North Central regional water. They have to have members vote and allow new members to the system. The best option is to have connections made at the time when the system is being built. Afterwards it can be quite expensive to hook into a system.

Shawna said with the drought conditions we are seeing, residents are going to see if they can opt into a system. For North Central, the process is for new system member entities to request membership. Current members need to have 70% approval vote. Power has requested to become a member. Each system is a little different on their requirements to join. We will see more members wanting to come into these different regional water systems with the drought conditions.

Montana Department of Commerce

Rosie Goldich is the CDBG Coordinator at Commerce. We just had a CDBG planning grant application round end last Friday, July 10, 2026, and we are reviewing those applications. Rosie is hoping to have another round of CDBG planning applications later this fall but due date is yet to be determined.

For public and community facilities we will have another round of applications due the end of October. No due date has been set. Then we will have a pre-application training for public and community facilities in early October.

We went through the ARMS process with our 2026 Public and Community Facility Application Guidelines and there are a couple changes to the application. If you will be applying this year, please review the 2026 application guidelines found on our website.

W2ASACT Workshops

Autumn Bahr said that towards the end of the year preparations will start for the W2ASACT presentation and funding workshop at the next Rural Water conference. If you have suggestions, let her know and she will let the training committee know.

Standard Documents

Mike Abrahamson said there was talk about a uniform environmental assessment. The way we do environmental assessments with the old MEPA outline is a rigorous and detailed process. At the National level they are evaluating MEPA and the impacts on the SRF program. As far as SRF they may not have the guidance out until 2028. There are many states in Region 8 that are trying to figure this out. We will see if there is a way to push this forward.

Mike referenced section 0900's and noted some programmatic requirements between BABA and American Iron and Steel. He talked about the effects of BABA requirements on CDBG and RD funding and requirements on recycled dollars. He is hoping in the Clean Water Program to take co-funded projects where BABA is required and make those our equivalency projects. He said as our CAP grants shrink, some projects may have to be non-equivalency, which we have co-funded with CDBG and with RD. Stay tuned for updates.

Website

Autumn Bahr said there are no new updates to the website. Since the updates made to the Uniform Application, we have received some nice-looking applications. Let Autumn know if you experience issues with the Excel, Word or PDF versions of the documents. She expressed her appreciation for everyone's willingness to work with a new format.

Congressional Update

Anna Miller said SRF and WRF project funding allocations have been affected by Congressional Directed spending. She mentioned meeting with EPA last Wednesday, July 8, where the impact of Congressional spending was discussed. This spending takes money away from the SRF program. Mike Abrahamson said we have a good pipeline of projects that occur and because we co-fund so many projects with all the agencies here, our dollars tend to get spent later in a project after grant dollars have been spent. He mentioned CIFA where states share how they are doing getting funding dollars out to projects.

Anna added that we will have a new Senator and a new House District 1 person so there will be some education to bring those new people up to speed on our programs.

End of Updates

Next Meeting is scheduled for October 13, 2026, here in the Montana Room at DNRC.

Anna thanked all for attending and for all their hard work to help residents and communities in Montana.

Adjournment at 11:15.

July 14, 2026 Meeting link: https://mt-gov.zoom.us/rec/play/mTVg1n9UPwy_3VfzHAWlv2oGxkwGEBas8vpAzfX1tHeYldf_p_FSGMu86X90esL3SWyQtZ5-XcyhfM-l.2aj44pvZ8woYQP2c

Passcode: 9^U59trJ

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
 Commerce – Montana Department of Commerce
 COVID-19 – Corona Virus 2019
 DEQ – Montana Department of Environmental Quality
 DOC – Montana Department of Commerce
 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

14 July 2026

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

DRAFT