



# Water Rights Query System

## Montana DNRC Water Right Query System User Guide

*Updated August 14, 2025*

### Introduction

The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Water Right Query System (WRQS) application provides public access to water right information stored in Montana's Water Rights Database. The System features a suite of query and map tools, as well as the ability to export search results. Reference map layers include political boundaries, administrative water basin boundaries, Public Land Survey System (PLSS), Tribal Reservation boundaries, hydrography and property ownership.

Useful Background:

- For a basic understanding of water rights, review the [Understanding Water Rights](#) page.
- To learn more about the terms and abbreviations used in water rights in this document and within the WRQS, see the [Water Right Data Explanations Index](#).

### Application Interface

The labels **in red** on *Figure 1* correspond to the following functions and options of the WRQS:

- 1. Navigation.** The three buttons in the upper right are used to navigate between the Search, Table and About tabs. The default tab is the Search screen, which is shown in *Figure 1* and features search options and an interactive map.
- 2. Search Section.** The Simple and Advanced Search options enable the map, map buttons, table search results and table buttons following a search.
  - **2a:** **Minimize Search Panel** Caret – click to minimize/maximize the Search Panel.
- 3. Map Section**
  - **3a:** **Zoom In/Zoom Out** – or click and hold the map with your mouse to pan and use your mouse scroll wheel to zoom in and out.
  - **3b:** **Default Map View** – click to zoom out to the full extent.
  - **3c:** **Find my location** – you must have geolocation enabled on your device to show your location.
  - **3d:** **Search** – enter an address or place name and click the magnifying glass to zoom to that location.
  - **3e:** **Layers List/Legend** – click to open the layer list and turn on/off available layers. Click the Legend tab to view the legend. Note: only WRQS Feature Service layers (POU, POD and Reservoirs) are listed in the legend. Also, Cadastral layer is updated monthly, for the most up-to-date ownership information visit [Montana Cadastral](#).
  - **3f:** **Basemap Selector** – click to select one of the available basemaps from the list.
- 4. Search Results Section**
  - **4a:** **Show Selection>Show All** – If a search results in multiple records, individual records can be selected in the table and are shown as selected in the map. Click Show All to show all records again.
  - **4b:** **Clear Selection** – Clears selection features.
  - **4c:** **Refresh** – Refreshes the table query results.
  - **4d:** **Show/Hide Columns** – click to show which columns to show or hide.
  - **4e:** **Actions - Export all or Export Selected** – choose Export to JSON or Export to CSV.

Hover your mouse over any button to view a popup description of the function.

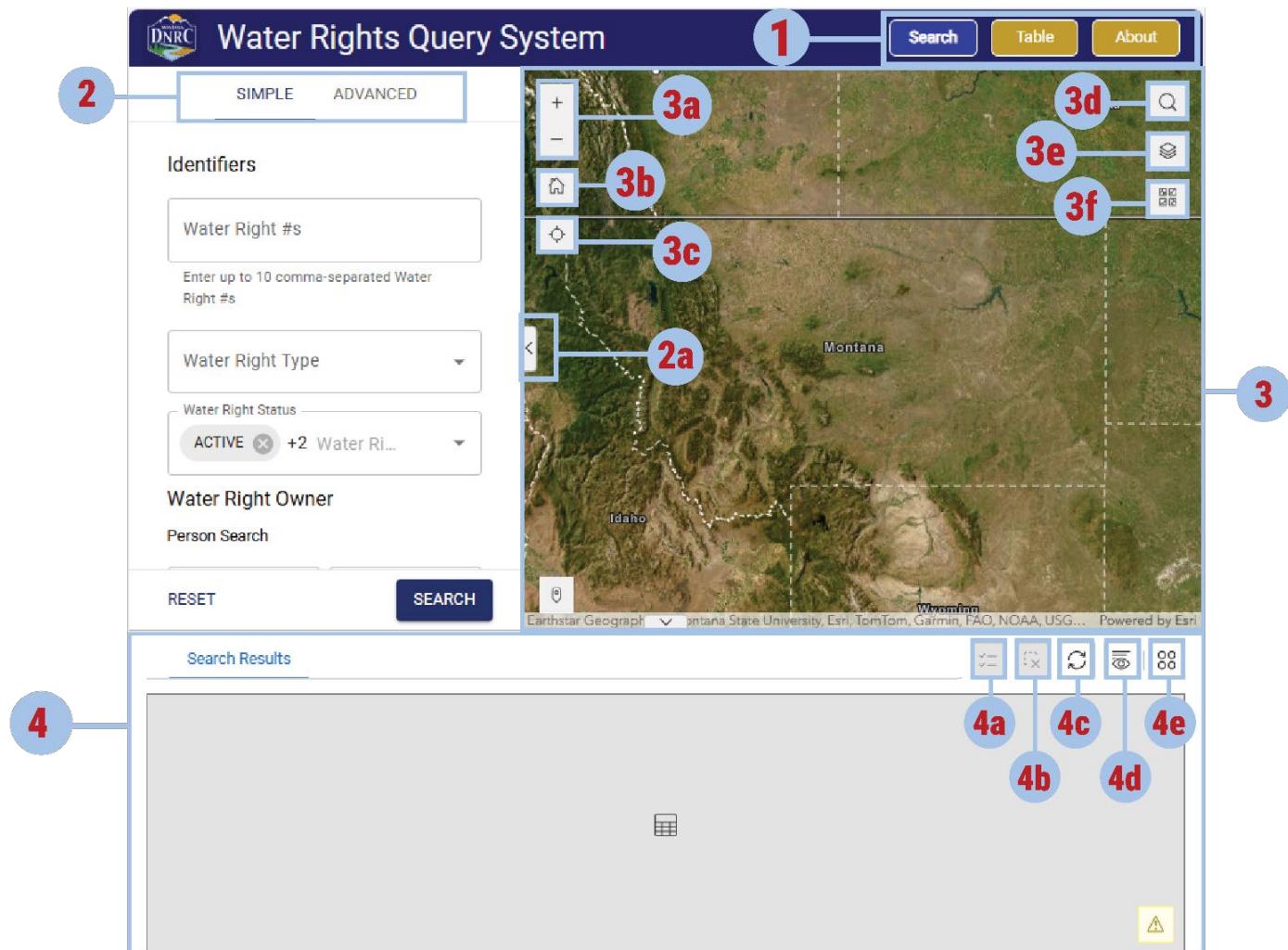


Figure 1. WRQS application interface showing the application layout, search options, map, search results table and functions.

## Search Tab Features

WRQS has simple and advanced search options. Both utilize smart query technology, which makes your search more likely to return the results you are looking for (even if your search term is not an exact match for the record in DNRC's database). Drop down lists are also available for some search parameters.

**Simple Search** is the fastest choice if you know the water right number, type or status; water right owner (person or entity); or geocode of the water right you are looking for.

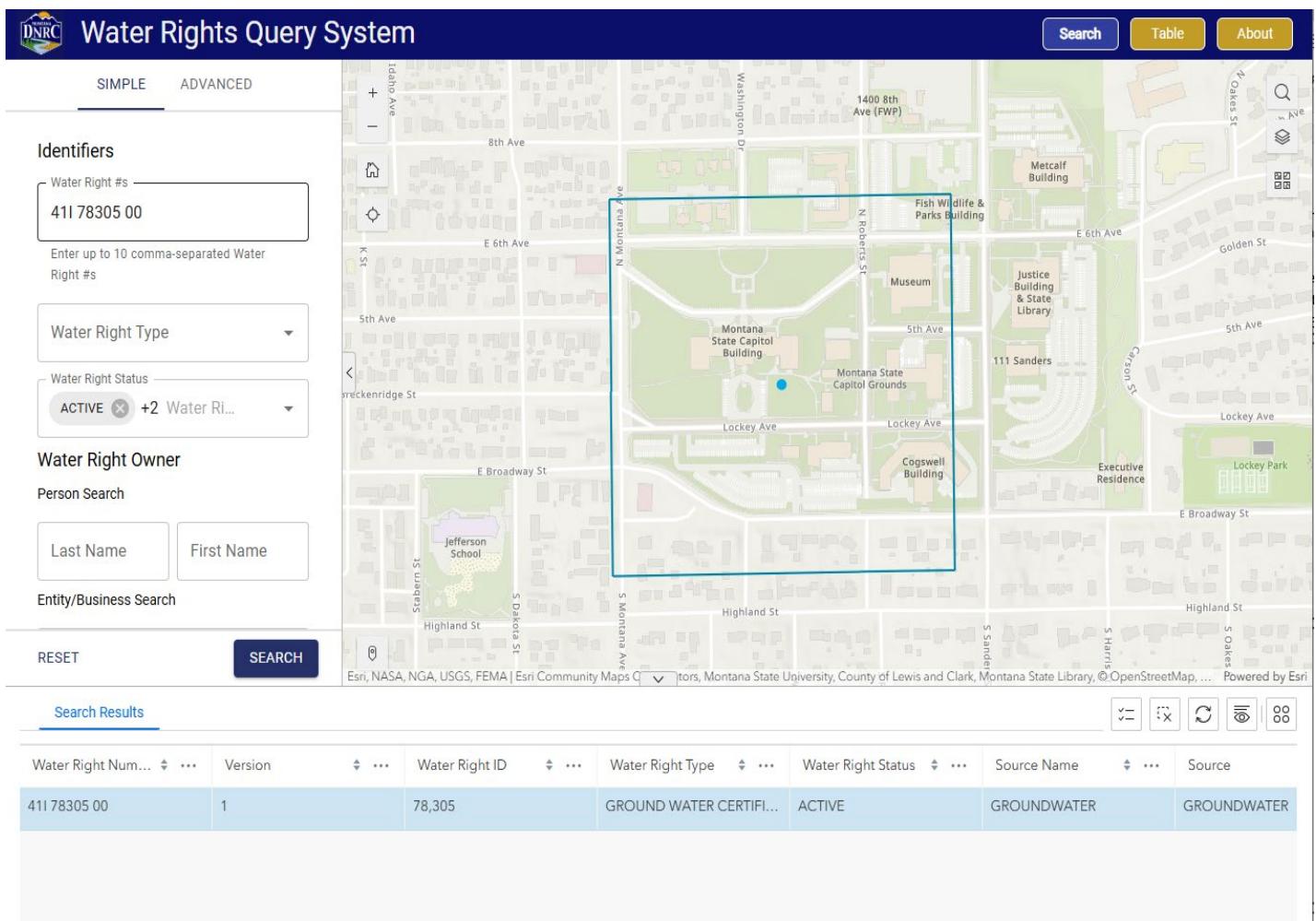
**Advanced Search** can be used to narrow down a search or to pull all the water rights records meeting certain criteria. For example, you can use it to return all the water rights in the selected adjudication basin or water source. There are many criteria to choose from (priority date range, owner, county, type, status and more), and you can also search by any combination of fields.

*Note: At least one option from the “Location Options” box (Options: point of diversion (POD), place of use (POU), reservoir) and any combination of options from the other fields must be selected to enable the Search button. To search by Source Name on the Advanced Search, you must select a “Source Type” (Surface or Ground Water).*

Click the Search button or press Enter on your keyboard to run the search. The map automatically zooms to the appropriate extent and populates the Search Results table. The Results Count reveals the number of records based on the search criteria.

You can review result attributes by scrolling through the table or by clicking on mapped water right features to access a popup window with water right information.

Selecting a record in the table causes that record to be highlighted on the map and all nonselected water rights to disappear from the map and the table. To recover the entire search, click the search button at the bottom of the page or press Enter again. *Figure 2* details the results of a simple search using Water Right # ‘411 78305’ as input.



*Figure 2. Example of Simple Search using Water Right # 411 78305 00.*

Similarly, an example of an Advanced Search to identify PODs, POUs, and Reservoirs in basin Missouri River Above Holter Dam (41I) with the purpose of Power Generation and owned by The Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation yields one search result. “Include All Results” in the “Location Options” can be checked to include water rights that have no mapped features, such as “Cancelled Rights” (see *Figure 3*).

Water Right Num...	Version	Water Right ID	Water Right Type	Water Right Status	Source Name	Source	General Abstract	Scanned!
41I 16825 00	1	16,825	PROVISIONAL PERMIT	ACTIVE	MISSOURI RIVER	SURFACE	View	View

*Figure 3. Advanced Search Example showing basin 41I, use of Power Generation, and owned by MT DNRC.*

Also on the Advanced Search tab, users can search by priority date. The Priority Date Range tool allows users to specify start and end date parameters for their search. If checked, the 1/1/1100 (TIME IMMEMORIAL) option returns compacted water rights held in trust by the Bureau of Indian Affairs for fish and wildlife purposes (check box shown in red).

## Table Tab Features

Clicking the Table button at the top right of the screen allows users to view the results table that populates below the map in full screen. The search results and functionality included are identical in both displays.

**Arranging and Exporting Data from Results Table:** Users can rearrange table columns by clicking, holding, dragging and dropping. You can also sort records (ascending or descending) and enable or hide columns using the Show/hide columns button (labeled **4d in red** - *Figure 1*). Once data is arranged and sorted to their preference, users can export all tabular search results by clicking the Actions -> Export to JSON/Export to CSV button (labeled **4e in red** - *Figure 1*) located at the top right of the results table. Data can be exported to CSV (excel) and/or JSON.

**Exporting Data from Related Tables:** On the Table Page, to export sets of water rights records from the related tables (Other Versions, Points of Diversion, Places of Use and Reservoirs) following a Simple or Advanced Search, perform the following workflow:

1. Select your record of interest from the Results Table.

2. Click on one of the available related table buttons; the related records from the results table for the chosen related table will be displayed and selected.
3. On the right side of the related tables view, Click on Actions -> Export to JSON/Export to CSV.

\* Note: If the selected record in the results table only has 1 version, the Other Versions related table will be empty. Correspondingly, if the selected record in the results table has 2 versions, only 1 version will be shown in the Other Versions table. The Results Table shows the active version of the water right.

Figure 4 details this workflow:

Step 1. Select your record of interest from the Results Table.

Water Right Nu...	Water Right Type	Water Right Status	Scanned Docum...	Versions Count	Points of Diversi...	Places of Use Co...	Reservoir Count
40R 22428 00	STATEMENT OF CLAIM	ACTIVE	View	6	1	2	0
40R 187339 00	STATEMENT OF CLAIM	ACTIVE	View	4	4	9	3
40R 187341 00	STATEMENT OF CLAIM	ACTIVE	View	4	4	8	3
40R 165985 00	STATEMENT OF CLAIM	ACTIVE	View	4	4	3	0
40R 187342 00	STATEMENT OF CLAIM	ACTIVE	View	4	4	12	3
40R 188191 00	STATEMENT OF CLAIM	ACTIVE	View	4	1	1	0
40R 188190 00	STATEMENT OF CLAIM	ACTIVE	View	4	1	1	0
40R 30123549	STATEMENT OF CLAIM	ACTIVE	View	4	1	1	0
40R 30123548	STATEMENT OF CLAIM	ACTIVE	View	4	1	1	0

Step 2. Select one of the related tables you're interested in.

Water Right Nu...	Water Right Type	Water Right Status	Source Name	Source	General Abstract	Scanned Docu...
40R 187339 00	STATEMENT OF CLAIM	ACTIVE	UNNAMED TRIBUTARY O...	SURFACE	View	View
40R 187339 00	STATEMENT OF CLAIM	ACTIVE	SAND CREEK	SURFACE	View	View
40R 187339 00	STATEMENT OF CLAIM	ACTIVE	SAND CREEK	SURFACE	View	View

Step 3. Click on Actions -> Export to JSON/Export to CSV.

Figure 4. Workflow example for exporting record sets from one of the related tables based off a selected record in the results table.

## Other Available Documents and Reports

Three hyperlinks are available from the Results Table:

- General Abstract,
- Scanned Documents and
- Change Authorization (“CHAU”) Scanned Docs.

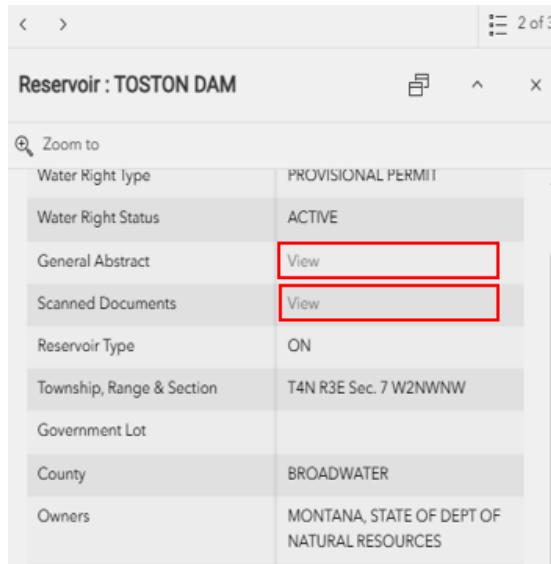
General Abstract and Scanned Documents can also be accessed via the map popup that appears after clicking a map feature (CHAU Scanned Docs from popup view are coming soon). Follow the links to access PDFs of the Original Water Right File, Water Right Application File, Ownership Updates, Adjudication Documents, Updates to File, Change Authorizations and Final Decree Abstract (if available).

The presence of an associated Abstract, Scanned Document, or Change Authorization Document for a given water right

record is

Source Name	Source	General Abstract	Scanned Docum...	CHAU Scanned ...
MISSOURI RIVER	SURFACE	<a href="#">View</a>	<a href="#">View</a>	

indicated by the word “View” in the corresponding field in the Results Table and the word “link” in the map popup view. In the example below, Water Right Number ‘41I 16825 00’ has an associated General Abstract and Scanned Documents, but no CHAU Scanned Docs (see *Figure 5*).



Water Right type	PROVISIONAL PERMIT
Water Right Status	ACTIVE
General Abstract	<a href="#">View</a>
Scanned Documents	<a href="#">View</a>
Reservoir Type	ON
Township, Range & Section	T4N R3E Sec. 7 W2NWNW
Government Lot	
County	BROADWATER
Owners	MONTANA, STATE OF DEPT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

*Figure 5. Clickable links to Scanned Documents, Abstracts, and Change Authorization Documents (CHAU Scanned Docs) from the results table & map popup, highlighted in red.*

Abstracts are reports generated from the water right database and detail the attributes of the most recent version of the water right, including:

- Water Right Number
- Owners, Priority Date
- Purpose, Irrigation Type
- Maximum Flow Rate and Volume
- Climatic Area, Maximum Acres
- Source Name
- Source Type
- Period(s) of Use
- Place and Means of Diversion
- Place of Use
- Geocodes
- Remarks

## Scanned Documents

Clicking the Scanned Documents link (boxed in red in *Figure 6*, below) takes users to the Water Rights Digital Images search page (<https://dnrwaterrightdocuments.mt.gov/execute-search>).

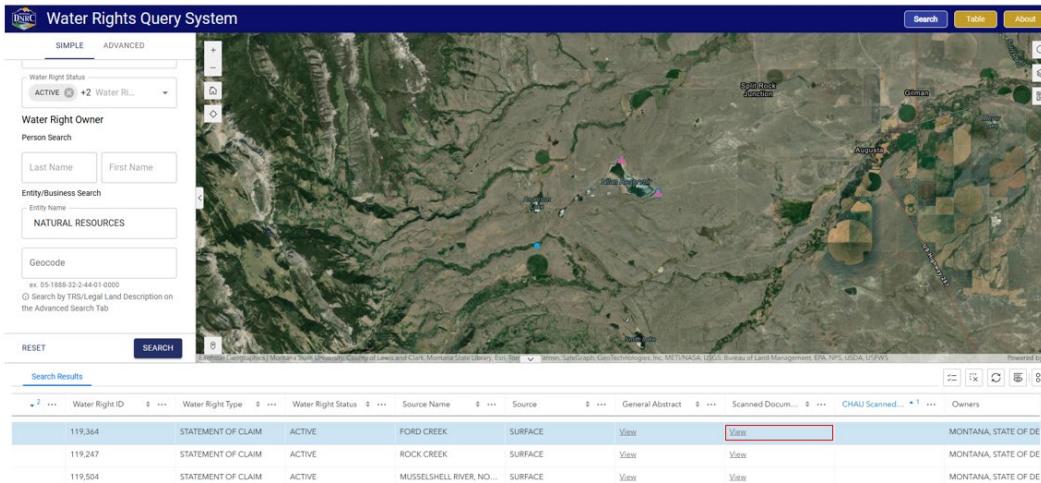


Figure 6. Scanned Documents View URL Example to access the Water Rights Digital Images HTML Search Page using Montana DNRC Water Right Record 41K 119364 00 as an example.

Figure 7 shows the Water Rights Digital Images associated with Water Right Number 41K 119364 00, which is owned by Montana DNRC.

The screenshot shows the Water Rights Digital Images HTML Search Page. The page has a header 'Water Rights Digital Images' and a footer with links to 'Privacy & Security', 'Accessibility', and 'mt.gov'. The main content area is a table with the following data:

Basin Id	Water Right	Extension	Type	Comment	Updates	Scan Date	File Size	View	☰
41K	119364	00	STATEMENT OF CLAIM	None	WATER COURT DOCUMENT	2024-01-26	959 KB	<a href="#">View</a>	
41K	119364	00	STATEMENT OF CLAIM	None	WATER COURT DOCUMENT	2024-01-03	1022 KB	<a href="#">View</a>	
41K	119364	00	STATEMENT OF CLAIM	None	UPDATE TO FILE	2021-01-28	2 MB	<a href="#">View</a>	
41K	119364	00	STATEMENT OF CLAIM	None	UPDATE TO FILE	2020-07-24	2 MB	<a href="#">View</a>	
41K	119364	00	STATEMENT OF CLAIM	None	FILE	2011-01-04	6 MB	<a href="#">View</a>	

Numbered callouts point to specific features:

- 1: Filter box (top left of the table).
- 2: Column headers (Basin Id, Water Right, Extension, Type, Comment, Updates, Scan Date, File Size, View, ☰).
- 3: 'View' link for the first document (row 1).
- 4: 'Select All', 'Download Selected', and 'Download Current Page' buttons (top right of the table).
- 5: Download buttons (checkboxes) for the first and last documents (rows 1 and 5).
- 6: Pagination controls (Items per page: 10, Page: 1 - 5 of 5).

Figure 7. Water Rights Digital Images HTML Search Page (<https://dnrwaterrightdocuments.mt.gov/execute-search>) & outlined components. Multiple files can be viewed & downloaded, along with filter, sort, download, and viewing options. Column headings are sortable in ascending & descending order. Type text into the Filter window to further refine results.

The labels **in red** on Figure 7 correspond to the following functions of the Water Rights Digital Images Search Page:

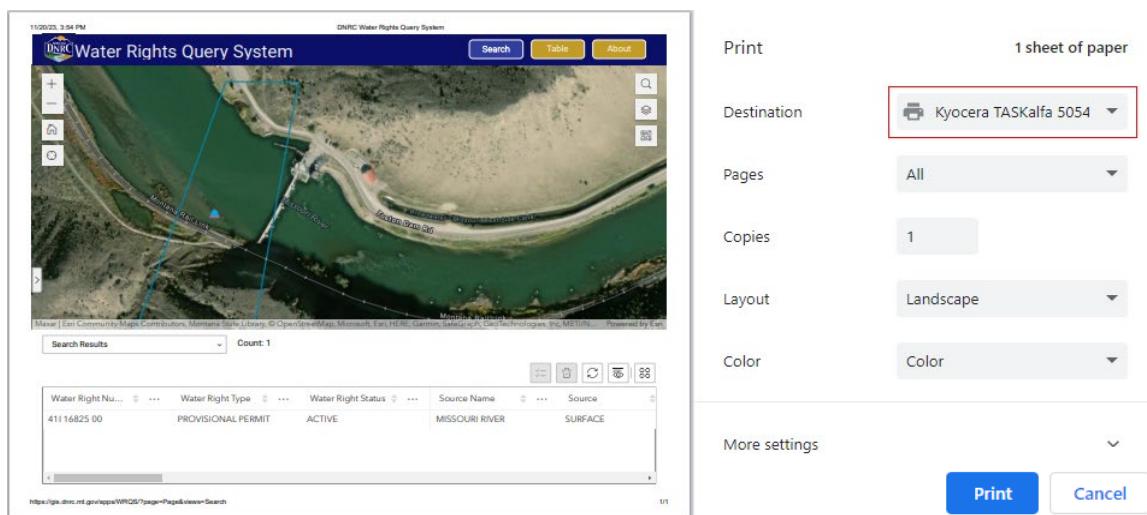
1. **Filter box.** Enter text in the box to filter results. For example, typing 'WATER COURT' will filter out every result from the list except the two records containing Water Court documents.

2. **Sortable column headings.** Click any of the column headings (Basin, Water Right Number, Water Right Extension, Water Right Type, Comment, Updates, Scan Date, File Size and View) to sort results in ascending or descending order based on the selected column.
3. **View/Download document button.** Click the View button to open a document, then download the document if desired. *Note:* The View button will change to dark gray if a record has already been viewed/downloaded to help users keep track of which records they have opened. Users can view multiple files at once.
4. **File Selector button.** Click the File Selector button to enable selection options for downloading various combinations of records.
5. **Individual file selector boxes.** Select individual or multiple files using the file selector boxes and click Download Selected to download the selected records. A zipped (zip) file of PDF's will be created containing the selected files.
6. **Item Display Selector.** Some water rights may contain hundreds of scanned documents. The Item Display Selector allows users to choose how many records to display per page (10-100), and the left/right carets allow users to navigate through the pages of documents if necessary.

## Create Your Own Map

Users can save and print maps of their WRQS search results. To gain a larger map extent, click the caret icon on the right-hand side of the Search Panel to minimize the Search Panel (labeled **2a** in *Figure 1*; click the caret again to maximize the Search Panel). Pan and zoom the map to your desired map extent. Then, right click on any space in the application other than the map and select ‘Print’ from the drop-down menu.

Navigate your device’s printer settings to either save the map as a PDF or send it to the printer configured for your device. You may wish to select the “Landscape” page orientation. The screenshots below show this process for most PCs.



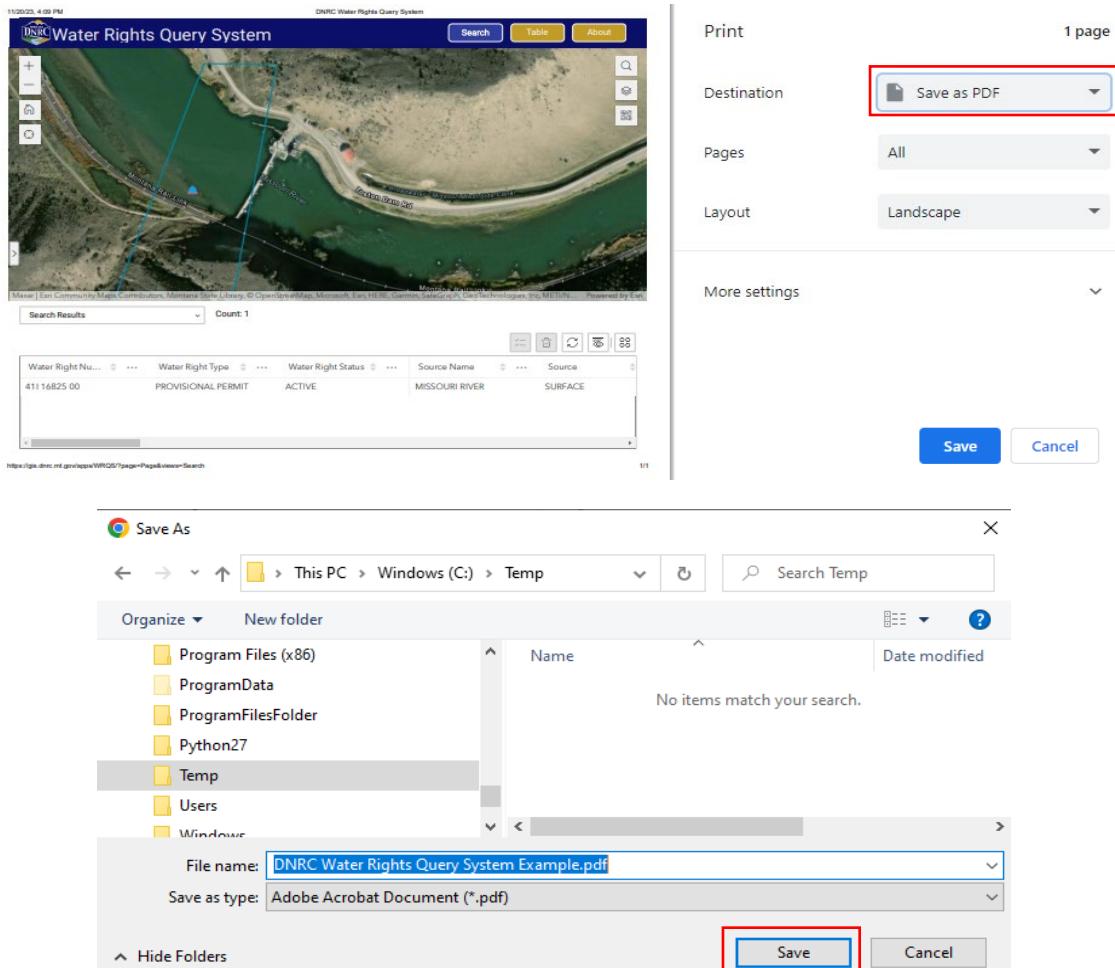


Figure 8. Create your own map example; top image shows how to print directly. Middle image shows how to save a digital .pdf copy. These steps may vary depending on your browser and device type.

## About Page Features

Search      Table      About

Click on the About button in the top right of the screen to navigate to the About tab. This page features:

- A high-level overview of the Water Rights Query System,
- Answers to frequently asked questions, and instructions for providing user feedback suggestions for future enhancements.
- The latest version of this User Guide.
- A [work completed/work in progress table](#) that summarizes the list of beta-tester and stakeholder provided comments and requests for enhancements, their solution, status and completed/anticipated completion date.
- The [WRQS Metadata Guide](#), which details the dataset name, REST URL, data update frequency, and date obtained is also included.

Future WRQS deployments, tool updates, functionality enhancements, and additional FAQ's will be announced on the About Page. ***Thank you for reviewing this User Guide! Please provide future functionality requests and enhancements via [DNRCMTWATERRIGHTINFO@MT.GOV](mailto:DNRCMTWATERRIGHTINFO@MT.GOV).***