

Montana Water Court
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**MONTANA WATER COURT
UPPER MISSOURI DIVISION
RUBY RIVER
BASIN 41C
PRELIMINARY DECREE**

ORDER EXTENDING PRELIMINARY DECREE OBJECTION DEADLINE

The objection period for the Preliminary Decree in Basin 41C, the Ruby River Basin, is scheduled to close on December 22, 2025. On November 21, 2025, the United State of America (“United States”), on behalf of the Department of Interior (Bureau of Reclamation and Bureau of Land Management) and the Department of Agriculture – Forest Service filed a Request for Extension (“Request”). The Request asks the Court to extend the preliminary decree objection period for Basin 41C by an additional 90 days.

The Water Use Act authorizes the Court to extend the objection period for a preliminary decree, provided good cause is shown and the request for extension is received before the end of the current objection period. Section 85-2-233(2), MCA. The extension request satisfies both statutory criteria. The Request is timely because it comes well before the current objection deadline. As to good cause, the Request identifies the hardship resulting from the suspension of appropriations for the United States Department of Justice, during which the United States had only limited ability to address objections in other basins and generally was precluded from addressing objections in this

basin. Although the suspension of appropriations now has ended, it covered a significant period of time while this objection period was open. As the United States explains in its Request, Basin 41C includes significant federal interests. The Request indicates work on the Preliminary Decree objection analysis has resumed and is underway but will be facilitated by additional time.

The Court reviews this request mindful of its obligation to move the statewide adjudication to completion. At the same time, the Court recognizes that specific situations justify extensions, and an extension may ultimately streamline the objection resolution process. Additionally, as the Request notes, the Court has issued many decrees with objection deadlines during calendar year 2025. On balance, the Request demonstrates a 90-day extension is reasonable and meets the applicable statutory criteria.

Accordingly, it is ORDERED that the request is GRANTED, and the Basin 41C objection period is EXTENDED to **Monday, March 23, 2026** to file, not mail, objections to the Preliminary Decree in Basin 41C. This extension applies to ALL WATER CLAIMANTS AND OBJECTORS for claims in this Basin, regardless of whether they asked for an extension. The Court will publish at least one notice of the extension in the *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, *The Madisonian*, and the *Dillon Tribune*. The Court also will provide notice on the Public Notices and Information page on the Court's website (<https://courts.mt.gov/courts/water/Notices-Info/PublicNotices>) and to the Court's listserv.

ELECTRONICALLY SIGNED AND DATED BELOW.

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