

2008 Work Plan

Vulnerable Wetlands and Public Policy Working Group (SD#6 and SD#7)

Lynda Saul, Working Group lead.

Three ad hoc groups or advisors to work group lead are working on three issues to address the first year's work plan for this Working Group.

1. Wetlands and Water Rights – projects include:

- 1) Education and outreach via the new Landowners Guide to Wetland and article in the winter issue of Big Sky Small Acres.
- 2) DNRC and DEQ agreed that the Bitterroot Change detection report identified that about 70% of the 921 new ponds developed over the last 20 years have water rights, but that an exact determination is not possible without detailed database and GIS analysis.
- 3) DNRC has drafted administrative rules for water rights. These will be sent to state agencies in November for internal review, then to outside experts and finally to the general public.
- 4) Followed and reported on a Montana Department of Transportation bill request for an exemption from permit requirements for CWA required mitigation to restore a functional wetland. Passed the EQC Water Policy Committee 8-0.

2. Federal Clean Water Act – projects include:

- 1) Tracking the national issues surrounding the limitation of the Federal Clean Water Act due to recent Supreme Court rulings.
- 2) DNRC and DEQ drafted a joint position paper for the Governor's office on potential solutions.
- 3) DEQ has contract with the Association of State Wetland Managers to conduct a study regarding CWA tools used to protect Montana's wetland and aquatic resources and possible state approaches.

3. Flood plains – projects include:

- 1) DEQ received grant funds for a joint mapping project involving floodplains, wetlands, and riparian areas to pilot integrate resource information to assist local governments and communities.
- 2) Developing wetland training for local floodplain managers and others at the Association of Montana Floodplain Managers annual meeting in Spring 2009.

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