



July 9, 2015

Dear Community Water Supply,

The DEQ is a participating member of the Governor's Drought and Water Advisory Committee. Other members include DNRC, FWP, Agriculture, Livestock, Commerce, Disaster Services, National Weather Service, and the USDA Farm Service Agency. As you can see, the committee is multi-disciplinary to represent the interests of many groups throughout Montana.

Based upon information presented to the advisory committee, the Governor's Office recently released the May 2015 Governor's Report on the Potential for Drought and Flooding in Montana. This report, http://drought.mt.gov/Links/Documents/governors_drought-watersupply_report_2015.pdf, states that "at this time, the potential for impacts from the drought is *moderate to high* both east and west of the Continental Divide through July". The purpose of this letter is four-fold. Firstly, we would like to notify Public Water Supplies to the availability of the Governor's Report and stress that the State of Montana has already taken steps to prepare for potential water shortages and is currently taking more (see <http://drought.mt.gov/default.aspx> for more information). As a public water supplier, a drought can cause both short term and long term challenges. Available water can be reduced in lakes, reservoirs, streams, and underground aquifers and water quality can change making it more difficult to treat to acceptable standards. Therefore, our second goal is to encourage you to start now developing a plan on how you will respond to water shortages and water quality changes. The time to start planning and preparing for water emergencies is now, not after the emergency starts. Thirdly, we would like to provide a list of references to help you learn more so that you can be proactive during this time of water shortage. This is not an exhaustive list of sources, but will get you started on a quest for information.

1. Do you wonder how this year's water supply compares with previous years in Montana? Or how Montana compares with other areas in the United States? The Drought Risk Analysis Website <http://droughtatlas.unl.edu/> provides rainfall, drought, and other information for approximately 1000 locations across the United States including Montana. I strongly suggest using the "help" page to quickly learn how to find the information you want.
2. Do you want information on how a Public Water Supply can plan for a drought? Looking for a copy of the Montana Drought Response Plan? Choose the link "drought" on the AWWA Resources and Tools Website <http://www.awwa.org/resources-tools/water-knowledge.aspx> to find this information and much more.
3. Do you have opportunities to educate the public and/or school groups about water issues? The Alliance for Water Efficiency Website <http://www.home-water-works.org/> has information on water conservation, including a water use calculator. The Water Environment Federation Website <http://www.wef.org/PublicInformation/page.aspx?id=686> has lesson plans and a wealth of water information for the general public, teachers, college students, and water quality professionals.

4. Do you have time to watch the Western Governor's Drought Forum Webinars? There are currently five webinars available on the Western Governors' Drought Forum Website at <http://westgov.org/drought-forum/webinars> featuring water and drought management experts discussing the issues surrounding water shortage and drought issues. In addition, if you scroll to the bottom of the page, there are links for other webinars related to drought and water resources in the West.

5. Are you now ready to begin the process of preparing a drought contingency plan? The Drought-Ready Communities: A Guide to Community Drought Preparedness is available at http://drought.unl.edu/portals/0/docs/DRC_Guide.pdf. This guide will take you step-by-step through the process of developing a monitoring, communication, and response plan. The Drought Contingency Plan Public Water System template, designed for tribal public water systems, is available at http://www.water.ca.gov/tribal/docs/May_30_14/DroughtContingencyPlanTemplate%20on%20IH%20CA%20website.pdf. This template is designed to be applicable for a variety of water systems varying in complexity and water source. You can easily edit and modify the document to fit the needs of your water system.

6. You can also find information on water system climate resilience and sustainability at the Association of State Drinking Water Administrators (ASDWA) under the Source Water tab at <http://www.asdwa.org>.

Finally, the DEQ would like to be able to provide the Governor's Office with information specific to community water systems during drought (and flooding) conditions. Therefore, the fourth goal of this letter is to let you know that we are working on a questionnaire or survey and implementation procedures in order to collect and organize current information. Stay tuned for more information on this action item – we would appreciate input from all community water systems so that we can provide accurate, real-time information to the Governor's Office.

Just like the weather person on the evening news, we don't know what the future holds. However, there are models that predict a possible future and these models suggest a very dry year. Public Water Systems need to prepare now for both this year and subsequent years if the trend continues. Please use the above resource links for more information, and to contact individuals who can provide information to help your system prepare for climatic impact to your water supply. Please note that, in order to easily access the information through the links provided in this letter, we will post this letter on the DEQ Webpage at <http://deq.mt.gov/wqinfo/pws/default.mcp>.

Sincerely,



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