



Montana Department of  
**ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**

Brian Schweitzer, Governor

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Toney Ott  
Ecosystems Protection Program  
US EPA, 8EPR-EP  
1595 Wynkoop Street  
Denver, CO 80202-1129

RE: Wetlands Protection Grant CD998117-12 Final Project Report

August 20, 2008

Dear Toney,

Enclosed is a Final Summary Grant Project Report for EPA Wetlands Protection Grant CD998117-12. The Montana Department of Environmental Quality received a 104(b)3 Wetland Protection Development Grant from EPA for \$358,817 as stated in the Wetland Protection Assistance Agreement awarded September 1, 2004. This grant provided funding for six Montana wetland program development projects. Kris Knutson at the EPA Region 8 Montana Office was the original project officer for this grant. All projects were completed by the grant end date of September 30, 2007. MDEQ submitted individual final project reports for each project and a final Financial Status Report (FSR) to the EPA Region 8 Office in Denver.

Thank you for providing Montana DEQ with Wetland Protection Development funds. I am pleased with the wetland program development that Montana has been able to accomplish with the assistance of this funding. Please contact me at (406) 444-6652 or [lsaul@mt.gov](mailto:lsaul@mt.gov) if you have any questions about the project activities associated with this grant or the final summary grant project report.

Sincerely,

Lynda A. Saul  
Wetland Program Coordinator

Attachments

c. Joe Meek  
Susan McEachern

**Montana DEQ Final Summary Grant Project Report**  
**EPA Wetland Protection Grant CD 998117-12**  
**Federal Fiscal Year 2004 Grant (9/1/04 – 9/30/07)**

Six Montana wetland program development projects were funded from this award.

**1. Protecting Critical Water Resources in the Bitterroot Valley.**

**Project contracted to Bitterroot Water Forum.**

This project developed and field verified a wetland map and shallow groundwater map for 110 square mile area in northern Ravalli County experiencing rapid growth. County planning and environmental health staff were trained in identification of wetlands and use of the wetland and shallow groundwater mapping resources for land use decision making. Results from this project will be used to build expertise and resources for wetland protection in Ravalli County and transferable to other local governments.

**2. Montana Wetlands Monitoring and Assessment.**

**Project executed by Montana Department of Environmental Quality using interns and a contract to the Montana Natural Heritage Program.**

This project field tested and refined the DEQ rapid wetland assessment method using two DEQ interns and two amphibian field crews working for the Montana Natural Heritage Program. DEQ organized and held a Montana wetland monitoring and assessment meeting including presentations and program development expertise by Mary Kentula and Rich Sumner of EPA Corvallis with recommendations to focus monitoring and assessment program development in the Bitterroot, Flathead and Gallatin Valleys. DEQ staff developed a document titled "Integrating Wetland Inventory, Assessment and Monitoring into Local Watershed Plans and Montana's State Monitoring and Assessment Strategy". Unfortunately, DEQ management was not supportive of further wetland monitoring and assessment work at DEQ due to limited staff and needs to focus on TMDL deliverables. As a result, the DEQ Wetland Coordinator requested that MT NHP take a leadership role in wetland monitoring and assessment program development.

**3. Montana Imagery Acquisition for Use in Wetland Mapping.**

**Project contracted to the Natural Resource Information Service.**

The product from this grant is the 2005 NAIP color infrared (CIR) photo images partially purchased and made available with from this grant (total CIR acquisition cost was \$400,000 and funded by over a dozen partners). These images are freely available to the public through the Natural Resource Information System website using the Digital Atlas and Topofinder application mentioned in the final report. These can be found at: <http://nris.mt.gov/interactive.html>. The CIR photos will be used to identify wetlands for monitoring and assessment, acquisition, conservation, and restoration projects.

**4. Montana Wetland Outreach and Education.**

**Project contracted to the Montana State University Watercourse.**

This project produced several final products. A 16-page booklet titled "Representing Property with Wetlands and Riparian Areas, A Guide for Montana's Realtors" were produced and 10,500 copies distributed, a presentation for realtors and developers was

created and presented to 500 Realtors during eight workshops, research was executed on how to reach the development community, a Wetland Strategy Conservation Planning Session was implemented for over 30 professionals, over 600 students participated in two Wetland Festivals, 106 students participated in a conservation field day, over 50 educators participated in professional development workshops, tours, and conference sessions, two statewide wetland award ceremonies were executed, statewide professional development opportunities were attended, wetland information was posted and updated on the Montana Watercourse web site and distributed via various listservs, and finally, a riparian themed advertisement was created and ran in a local newspaper reaching 19,000 people in the circulation. Responses from the various workshops indicate not only the appreciation for such information, but also the ability to pass on the information to clients, students, and other community members and professionals. Developing outreach and education tools is a critical component of Montana's wetland program development.

**5. Wetland Assessment through Biological Metrics and Classification Enhancement. Project contracted to the Montana Natural Heritage Program.**

This project produced a final report titled "Crosswalking National Wetland Inventory attributes to hydrogeomorphic functions and vegetation communities: a pilot study in the Gallatin Valley, Montana." This pilot project demonstrated the value of crosswalking these two wetland mapping approaches and linking wetland functions to NWI types. This approach will be used in further mapping, monitoring, and assessment projects including the pilot demonstration project in the Bitterroot, Flathead, and Greater Gallatin Valley.

**6. Montana Wetland Leadership and Wetland Conservation Planning Project executed by Montana Department of Environmental Quality and a contract to the Prickly Pear Land Trust (PPLT).**

This project developed the Montana Wetland Program in three key areas: mapping, funding, and protection partnerships. For mapping, the DEQ Wetland Coordinator received unanimous approval from the Governor's Montana Land Information Advisory Council to add "wetlands" as the 13<sup>th</sup> official state priority data layer. This opened the door to apply for MLIAC funding for wetland mapping and helped to establish the Wetland and Riparian Mapping Center at MT NHP. Additional new funding sources for wetland protection work in Montana resulted from a September Wetland Council meeting focusing on new funding. Working with and honoring the Granger Ranches at the biennial Montana Wetland Stewardship Award in the State Capitol was the culmination of multi-agency partnership to begin restoring a 900-acre partially drained wetland in the Madison River Floodplain.

DEQ contracted with a local land trust to pilot targeted conservation and restoration outreach. PPLT identified landowners with potential wetland and riparian protection interests and targeted conservation easement outreach to those landowners. Beginning with a dynamic list of 58 landowners, 9 were in active discussion regarding permanent conservation or wetland enhancement and restoration at the conclusion of the contract period. PPLT will continue to work with these prospective wetland protection landowners. This pilot was deemed a success, both with identifying potential protection

projects and engaging an active land trust in highlighting the need for wetland and riparian protection and restoration. These benefits will accrue for wetland conservation long after the contract has been completed.