

Clarks Fork Yellowstone Watershed Project

DEQ will start a water quality monitoring project in the Clarks Fork Yellowstone Watershed. The project will help build upon monitoring data and assess whether a Total Maximum Daily Load is necessary. A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) defines the amount of a certain pollutant a waterbody can hold before it impacts water quality. If a TMDL is determined then a water quality improvement plan provides solutions and best management practices to reduce pollution levels. The entire process is estimated to take three to five years.

What is DEQ's Clarks Fork Yellowstone monitoring project?

Every stream and lake in Montana is classified according to the beneficial uses it should reasonably be able to support. DEQ staff will be collecting water quality data to determine the extent to which the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone and its tributaries are supporting each of their designated beneficial uses and determine the current water quality condition throughout the watershed.

What are beneficial uses?

Beneficial uses are goals and expectations specified in water quality standards for state surface waters usage. Beneficial uses provide context for assessing the suitability of water quality. Examples, of beneficial uses include drinking water, aquatic life, agriculture, and recreation.

What goes into monitoring and assessment?

DEQ collects data on a wide variety of potential pollutants and conditions by monitoring at multiple locations along a waterbody. We then compare the data to water quality standards or reference data and determine if a waterbody is impaired by one or more pollutants.

How is the data used? Who is it going to?

The results of our work will be used to update current waterbody impairment listings in the watershed and if necessary develop a Total Maximum Daily Load report describing the extent to which specific pollutants are preventing streams from supporting of all their designated beneficial uses. Some of the data may also be used to develop permit limits for point source dischargers (e.g., wastewater treatment plants). Local groups may use the data to implement voluntary restoration activities or best management practices. All data collected by DEQ is publicly accessible.

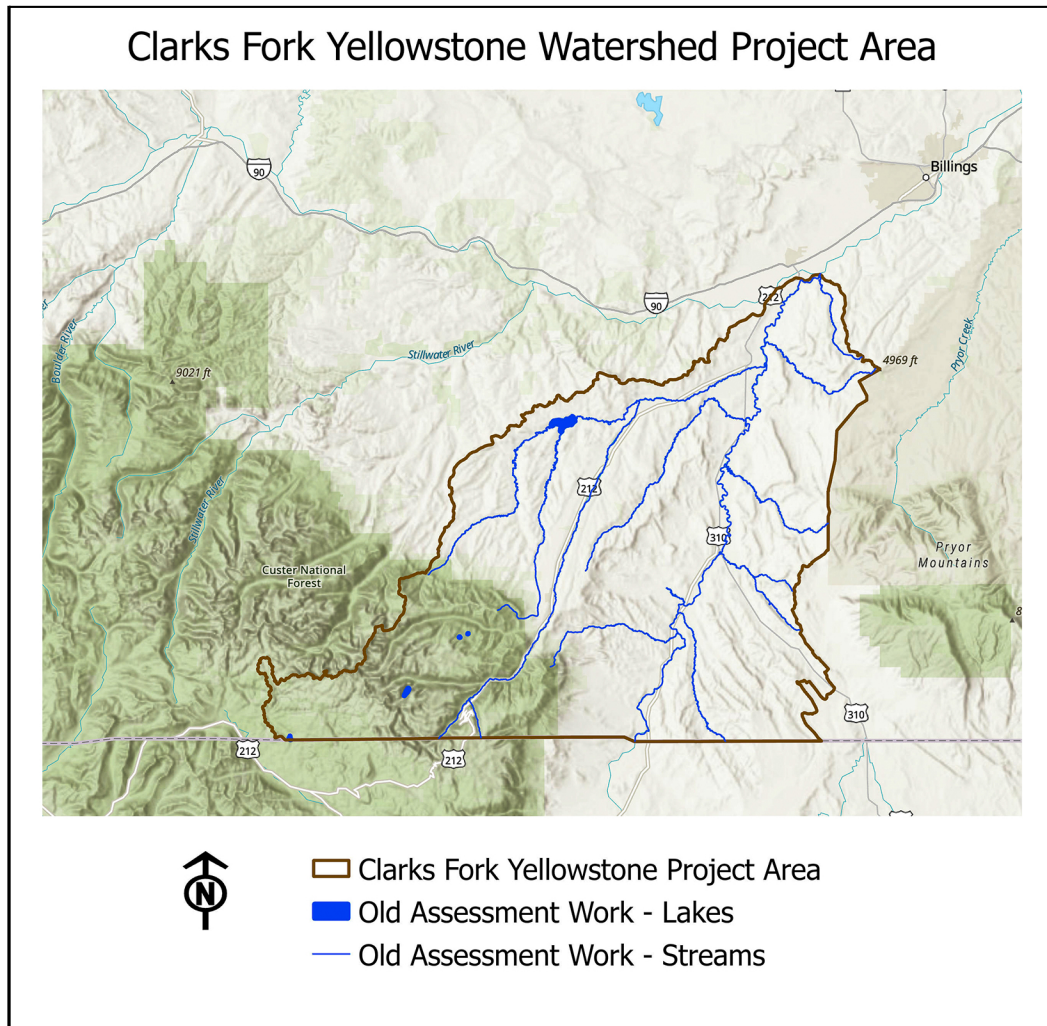
How will community members and landowners be affected?

- Opportunity to participate in voluntary best management practices to reduce nonpoint source pollution.
- DEQ may request land access to monitor water quality. You may also see some activity out in the watershed from our monitoring and assessment team, feel free to ask them questions!
- This process could affect permit conditions for point source. There will be no regulatory impacts to nonpoint source pollution

DEQ will not affect water rights as determined by state law (MCA 75-5-102).

Are there benefits to the community?

- Knowledge on your water quality in your watershed
- Improvements in water quality to benefit you, your kids, grandkids, and community
- Open up funding opportunities for projects to improve the quality of your water
- The end result could lead to clearer streams and greener landscapes.



Additional Questions? Contact:

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Visit our website for further information on water quality programs
<https://deq.mt.gov/water/Programs/sw>