

# STATEWIDE TMDL ADVISORY GROUP MEETING SUMMARY

## SEPTEMBER 19, 2024

Hybrid meeting: DEQ Metcalf Room 45 and Zoom  
1:00 p.m.

To supplement this meeting summary, see **Attachment A** for a copy of the presentation given by DEQ. Both this summary and the meeting agenda can be found on the STAG website at: <https://deq.mt.gov/water/Councils>

### ATTENDANCE: STATEWIDE TMDL ADVISORY GROUP (STAG) MEMBERS

STAG Member & Affiliation	Representing
Brian Heaston City of Bozeman	Point Source Dischargers
Brian Sugden American Forest Management, Inc.	Forestry Industry
Greg Bryce Hydrometrics, Inc.	Mining
Jeff Schmalenberg MT Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation	State Trust Land Management Agencies
Karli Johnson Montana Farm Bureau	Farming-Oriented Agriculture
Ryan Leland City of Helena	Municipalities
Andy Efta, substitute U.S. Forest Service	Federal Land Management Agencies

### ATTENDANCE: OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Christina Staten, DEQ, TMDL Section Supervisor  
Andy Ulven, DEQ, Water Quality Planning Bureau Chief  
Tatiana Davila, DEQ, Water Protection Bureau Chief  
Katie Makarowski, DEQ, Standards and Modeling Section Supervisor  
Lisa Anderson, DEQ, TMDL Section  
Peter Brumm, EPA, Region 8  
Steve Carpenedo, DEQ, Nonpoint-Source and Wetlands Section  
Joe Vanderwall, DEQ, TMDL Section  
Patrick Kelly, Director of Western MT Water Projects  
Tyler Halligan, DEQ, Water Protection Bureau Permit Writer  
Casey Lewis, Western Montana Conservation Commission  
Alex Ciessau  
Lindsey Thane  
Matt Vincent, Montana Mining Association  
Nate Besich, City of Great Falls

Rickey Schultz, HDR  
John Iverson, Treasure State Resources Association  
Susie Turner, City of Kalispell  
Joe Schrader, City of Kalispell  
Amy Deitchler, Great West Engineering  
Quincey Johnson, Upper Missouri Waterkeeper, Outreach Director  
Aaron Losing, City of Kalispell  
Anthony, Yaak Valley Forest Council

## **MEETING INITIATION**

Christina Staten, DEQ's TMDL Section Supervisor, began the meeting at 1:00 p.m. with introductions of DEQ staff in attendance and a walkthrough of how to ask questions through Zoom. She mentioned that Steve Carpenedo was filling in for Hannah Reidl to give updates from the Nonpoint Source and Wetlands Section. Christina conducted a roll call of STAG members. Seven out of eleven current members of the STAG were present. Several other meeting attendees briefly introduced themselves. Christina reviewed the meeting agenda.

## **STAG CHAIR NOMINATIONS**

Christina moved on to nominations for the STAG chair position. She explained that it is an informal position that involves meeting facilitation, agenda coordination with DEQ, and communicating feedback to DEQ from other STAG members. She opened the floor to nominations.

### **Discussion**

Jeff Schmalenberg, state trust land management representative, nominated himself and Brian Sugden, forestry representative, for the position of chair. Greg Bryce, mining representative, seconded Jeff's nomination of Brian. Brian indicated his willingness to be chair, and noted he has been a STAG member since its inception and can bring administrative knowledge. Christina Staten agreed to Brian Sugden as STAG chair.

## **DEQ WATER QUALITY PLANNING BUREAU PRIORITIES**

Andy Ulven, DEQ Water Quality Planning Bureau Chief, gave a high-level overview of the Water Quality Planning Bureau priorities. He began with general goals of the Water Quality Standards and Modeling, Monitoring and Assessment, TMDL, and Nonpoint Source and Wetlands sections.

### **Discussion**

Jeff Schmalenberg, state trust land management agency representative, asked for updates on the 319 grants that were funded in the last cycle including the type of project and the general locations. Steve Carpenedo, DEQ Nonpoint Source and Wetlands Section, answered that most funded projects are in the western half of the states. However, new funding from the state of Montana is set to open funding for a greater diversity of projects in partnership with local groups such as conservation districts.

Brian Sugden, forestry representative, followed up and asked about the status of focus watershed funding. Steve answered that many of the large projects are still within the focus watersheds which operate on a 3-year time window.

## TMDL SECTION UPDATES

Christina Staten, TMDL Section Supervisor, provided updates on the TMDL Section. She listed the current staff and noted that two TMDL writers have left DEQ since the last meeting, but the TMDL section is planning to hire one additional writer in the coming months. Christina gave an overview of how TMDL commitments are submitted to EPA. Currently, TMDLs are committed to either be 'in development' or 'complete' on two-year intervals. Per EPA, an "in development" TMDL for one two-year cycle should be "complete" in the following two-year cycle.

Montana's 2023 and 2024 commitments to EPA included:

- Bitterroot River Nutrient Protection Plan (completed in 2023)
- Beaverhead River watershed nutrient TMDLs (in development)
- Red Rock River watershed nutrient TMDLs (in development)
- Ashley Creek (2014 Flathead-Stillwater TMDL document) nutrient and sediment revisions (in development)

Montana's planned 2025 and 2026 commitments to EPA include:

- Beaverhead River watershed nutrient TMDLs (complete by September 30, 2026)
- Red Rock River watershed nutrient TMDLs (complete by September 30, 2026)
- Ashley Creek (2014 Flathead-Stillwater TMDL document) nutrient and sediment revisions (in development)

Beyond 2026, Montana's draft TMDL priorities include:

- Upper Gallatin excess algae study leading to TMDL development
- Smith River nutrients
- Upper Missouri River nutrients and metals
- Clarks Fork Yellowstone River
- TMDL revisions and consideration of advance restoration plans (ARPs) in tandem with adaptive management plans

In follow-up to the last STAG meeting, Christina discussed why completion of the Otter Creek iron TMDL is not part of Montana's next cycle of two-year commitments. Christina noted that this project does not rank high as a priority based on Montana's prioritization framework and then showed a slide that was shown at the March 2024 STAG meeting outlining TMDL prioritization factors (see slide 19 in **Attachment A**).

## Discussion

Greg Bryce, mining representative, asked if there is flexibility on EPA commitments once they are accepted. Christina responded that there is no flexibility on commitments, but completing additional TMDLs that were not part of the commitment is acceptable. Greg Bryce expressed concern about completing nutrient TMDLs on the Beaverhead and Red Rock since nutrient narrative standards are not set. He mentioned possible problems in the future after the standards are ironed out. Greg Bryce also asked for more engagement with mining interests during TMDL development, which he believes has been largely absent. Christina thanked Greg for his comments and noted that DEQ will be reaching out entities affected by wasteload allocations prior to releasing the Beaverhead TMDLs for public comment. She mentioned that since the Beaverhead and Red Rock TMDLs were listed as 'in development' in the

last cycle, EPA expects them to be completed in the upcoming cycle. Brian Sugden, forestry representative, also asked why the commitments are generally the same as last cycle. Christina responded that due to nutrient standards and staffing, the TMDL Section wanted to be conservative in its commitments. Other areas are also being worked on (Clarks Fork of Yellowstone, Gallatin, Smith, etc.) but no commitments are being made for those project areas yet.

Brian Heaston, point source dischargers representative, asked what role the STAG has under new EPA priority frameworks. Brian also expressed concern that decisions were largely already made. Christina responded that she would try to set meetings earlier before EPA deadlines, and that the STAG provides an advisory role as per state law and an opportunity for diverse interests to provide feedback on TMDL projects before they begin and during their development. In addition, DEQ considers public engagement, resource value, discharge permits, data availability and quality, and impact. In addition, Christina mentioned that EPA is also asking states to consider climate among their other factors as well.

Brian Sugden suggested that one major priority should be revising TMDLs once narrative nutrient standards are finished with rulemaking. Andy Ulven, Water Quality Planning Bureau Chief, mentioned that revisions are on the table, but the process may take a while since rulemaking is paused until after the next legislative session.

## **NONPOINT SOURCE AND WETLANDS UPDATES**

Steve Carpenedo provided updates on two new projects in the Nonpoint Source and Wetlands Section. The state was recently awarded a federal climate change pollution reduction grant to address nutrient pollution and algal blooms. Steve reported that there will be a heavy emphasis on education and outreach, but DEQ is still waiting for the funding to arrive. Steve also gave updates on the focus watersheds, which are 3-year commitments focused on larger and longer-term projects. The lower Gallatin watershed is the current focus watershed for Montana. The next focus watershed will start in 2026 and be decided by a more transparent application process, similar to the 319 grants application process.

### **Discussion**

Brian Sugden, forestry representative, asked if there was a process to show how effective nonpoint source projects are. Steve Carpenedo responded that DEQ mandates monitoring before and after projects to show effectiveness. DEQ also revisits projects five years after completion. Greg Bryce, mining representative, asked how other groups can assist with 319 or other restoration projects. Steve responded that most projects are completed through local watershed groups, who liaison with landowners. He mentioned that participation in local watershed groups and conservation districts is the best avenue for individuals and groups to contribute.

Karli Johnson, farming-oriented agriculture representative, asked, regarding the start of new focus areas, how education will be implemented in the first year. Steve answered that the initial push for focus areas is to gather support for projects among landowners.

## **MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT UPDATES**

Andy Ulven provided updates for the DEQ Monitoring and Assessment Section, as Darrin Kron, the section supervisor, was unavailable. The primary focus is the next Water Quality Integrated Report (IR), which lists all assessment results for the last two years. The next IR will not include nutrients due to the

narrative nutrient changes, but those assessments would be provided later as an addendum. Currently, there are major active monitoring projects in Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River and the Gallatin River (see slide 26 of **Attachment A**). In addition, assessment methods for dissolved oxygen, selenium, and ammonia are in the public comment period phase. More assessment methods are coming down the pipeline, with some depending on the outcome of new nutrient standards. See slide 27 of **Attachment A** for a complete list of assessment methods under development.

## **Discussion**

There was no discussion on this topic.

## **MEETING CLOSE**

Christina Staten moved to close the meeting and asked for topics for the next STAG meeting. Brian Heaston asked to further discuss the role of the STAG at the next meeting. Brian Sugden asked to add the Integrated Report to the agenda for discussion of which waterbodies are added/removed to impaired list. Ryan Leland, municipalities representative, asked to add legislation as a topic for the next meeting or as a standing item.

Karli Johnson asked to further discuss focus watershed processes, and the 'random acts of conservation' approach. Steve Carpenedo responded that focus watersheds are separate funding from 'random acts of conservation'. He also mentioned that new state funding will open more opportunities for projects outside of focus watersheds.

Christina thanked the STAG members for their feedback and participation and opened the meeting to public comments.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Patrick Kelly, Director of Western MT Water Projects, asked when the Integrated Report will be available to the public and whether there was a way to monitor TMDL development and assess whether waterbodies have improved on the Integrated Report. Christina responded that the Integrated Report will go through public comment and will be finalized after taking those comments into account. The final report and the copy available for public comment will be available on the DEQ website. The Integrated Report will show changes in waterbody status. In addition, DEQ conducts TMDL Implementation Evaluations (TIEs) to assess activities completed post-TMDL. TIEs are also located on DEQ's website at <https://deq.mt.gov/Water/Programs/tmdl>.

## **MEETING END**

Christina Staten mentioned that she will send out a poll to decide the next meeting date and time. She thanked all attendees for productive discussion and ended the meeting at 2:53 pm.

**ATTACHMENT A: SEPTEMBER 19, 2024 MEETING PRESENTATION**



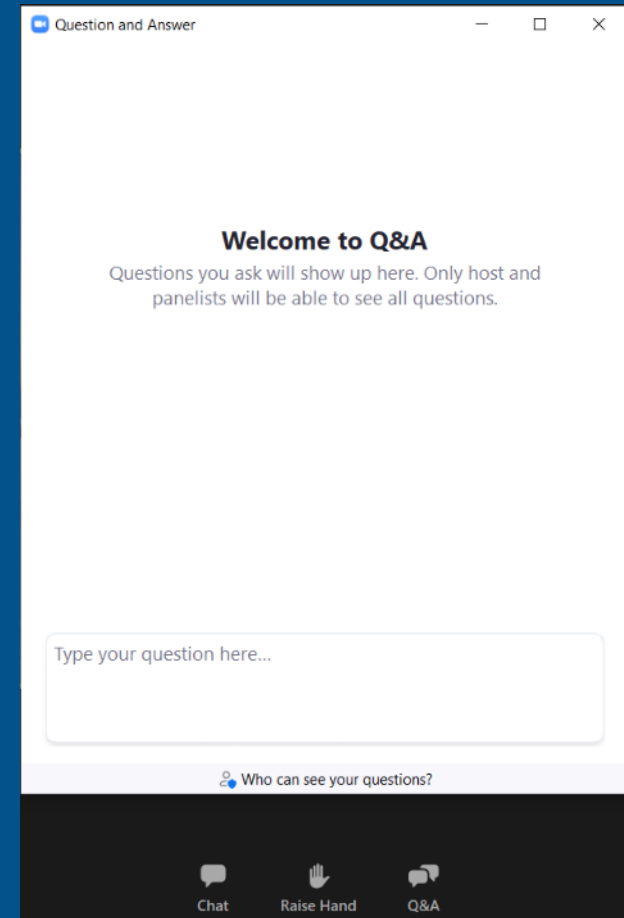
# Statewide TMDL Advisory Group

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September 19, 2024

# Welcome!

- This meeting is a webinar
- STAG members will be panelists
- Members of the public can raise their hand or use the Q&A feature to ask questions during the public comment portion of the meeting
- \*9 raises your hand if you're on the phone
- State your name and affiliation before providing your comment



Unmute

Chat

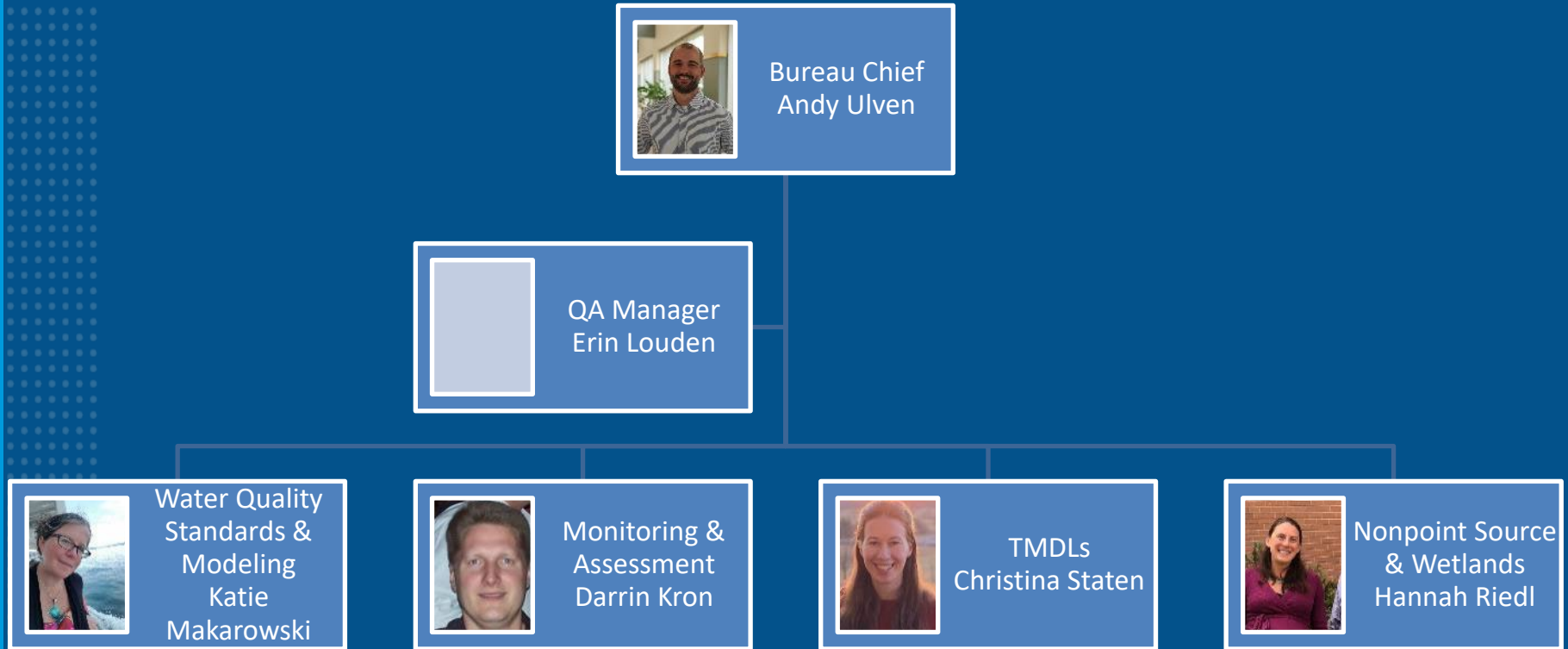
Raise Hand

Q&A

Leave



# Water Quality Planning Bureau



# STAG Roll Call

STAG Member & Affiliation	Representing	Term End Date
Karli Johnson Montana Farm Bureau	Farming-Oriented Agriculture	January 31, 2026
Ellie Brighton Montana Stockgrowers Association	Livestock-Oriented Agriculture	January 31, 2026
Frank Szollosi Montana Wildlife Federation	Conservation or Environmental Interest	January 31, 2026
David Brooks Montana Trout Unlimited	Water-Based Recreation	January 31, 2026
Brian Sugden Sugden Forest Environmental, LLC	Forestry Industry	January 31, 2026
Ryan Leland City of Helena	Municipalities	January 31, 2026
Brian Heaston City of Bozeman	Point Source Dischargers	January 31, 2026
Greg Bryce Hydrometrics	Mining	January 31, 2026
Vacant	Federal Land Management Agencies	
Jeff Schmalenberg Dept. of Natural Resources & Conservation	State Trust Land Management Agencies	January 31, 2026
Vacant (Substitute: Becca Boslough) Montana Association of Conservation Districts	Conservation District Supervisor – East	
Vacant (Substitute: Becca Boslough) Montana Association of Conservation Districts	Conservation District Supervisor – West	
Jordan Tollefson Northwestern Energy	Hydroelectric Industry	January 31, 2026
Mike Bias Fishing Outfitters Association of Montana	Fishing-Related Business	January 31, 2026

# Agenda

- **STAG Chair Nominations**
- **Water Quality Planning Bureau Priorities**
- **TMDL Priority Areas**
- **Water Quality Monitoring & Assessment Activities**
- **Nonpoint Source & Wetlands Program Updates**
- **Public Comment & Close of Meeting**



# STAG Chair Nominations



# Chair Discussion Recap

- Informal
- Meeting facilitation assistance
- Agenda feedback





# Water Quality Planning Bureau Priorities

- Andy Ulven, Bureau Chief

# WQPB Overview & Priorities

- CWA & MT WQA implementation
- Our objective
- Section goals and priorities:
  - Standards and Modeling
  - Monitoring and Assessment
  - TMDL
  - Nonpoint Source & Wetlands







# TMDL Priority Areas

- Christina Staten, TMDL  
Section Supervisor



# TMDL Section Staff Update

## 3 TMDL Planners

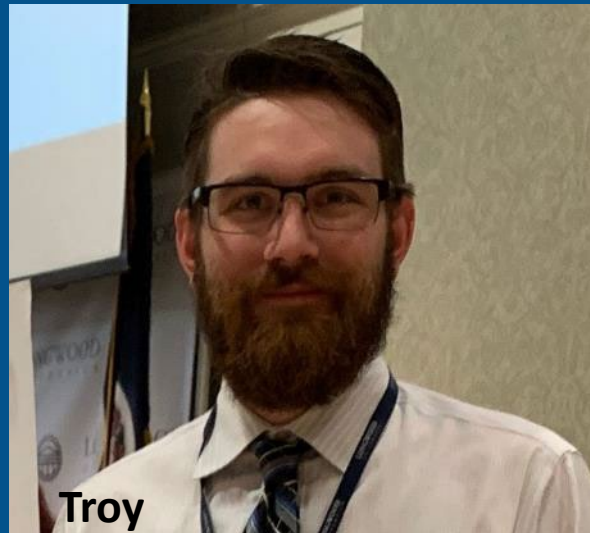
- Troy Clift
- Lisa Anderson
- Joe Vanderwall

## 1 Adaptive Management Program Scientist

- Kyle Milke

## 2 TMDL Planners Left DEQ

- Heather Henry
- Kylie Bodle



# TMDL Commitments

- Montana must submit TMDL commitments to EPA every two years, beginning in 2022 (Vision 2.0)
- Commitments can be “in development” or “complete”
- “In development” for one 2-year cycle should be “complete” the next 2-year cycle





# 2023-2024 TMDL Priorities

## Bridge Metric:

- Bitterroot River Nutrient Protection Plan (completion)
- Beaverhead Watershed Nutrient TMDLs (development)
- Red Rock Watershed Nutrient TMDLs (development)
- Ashley Creek (Flathead-Stillwater) Nutrient & Sediment Revision (development)



Bridge Metric Due: September 30, 2024

# 2025–2026 TMDL Priorities

- Beaverhead Watershed Nutrient TMDLs (complete)
- Red Rock Watershed Nutrient TMDLs (complete)
- Ashley Creek (Flathead-Stillwater) Nutrient & Sediment Revision (development)



Due: September 30, 2026



# Draft TMDL Priorities Beyond 2024 (Vision 2.0)

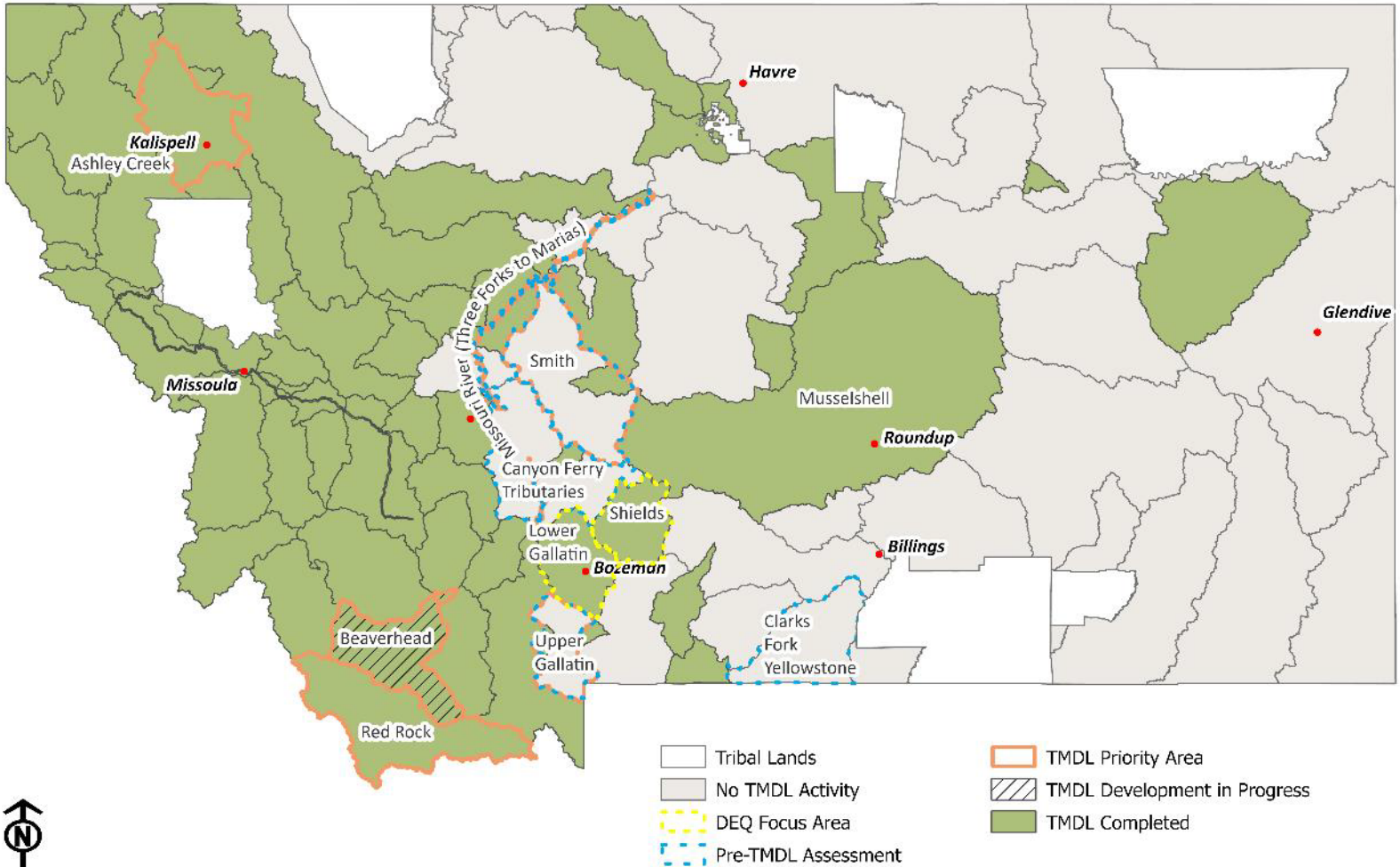
- Upper Gallatin - excess algae
- Smith River - nutrients
- Upper Missouri River - nutrients, metals
- Clarks Fork Yellowstone River
- TMDL revisions and consideration of ARPs in tandem w/AMP



Slide shown March 2024

# TMDL Development Status & Schedule

## TMDL Development Status



0 25 50 100 Miles



# Priorities Considerations

- Christina Staten, TMDL  
Section Supervisor



# Otter Creek Iron TMDL

- Not part of Montana's next cycle of 2-year commitments
- Does not rank high as a priority based on our prioritization framework





# TMDL Prioritization Factors

- New, individual discharge permit application
- TMDL implementation considerations
- Program coordination
- Resource value
- Potential impact to use (human health and aquatic life)
- Impairment characteristics (severity and magnitude)
- Court determinations
- General waterbody characteristics (size, importance)



Slide shown March 2024



# STAG Feedback / Discussion





# Nonpoint Source and Wetland Activities for 2024

- Stephen Carpenedo, Senior  
Wetland Specialist

# Nonpoint Source & Wetlands Program

## Climate Pollution Reduction Grant

- \$1,000,000
- 5-year grant
- Concentrate on nutrient reduction in lakes and upstream waters known for algal blooms
- Prioritization may include TMDL priority areas





# Nonpoint Source & Wetlands Program

## Focus Watershed Call

- 3 yr. \$500,000/yr.
- Used to focus 319 funding to smaller area to for more comprehensive watershed restoration.
- Request for proposal expected within next month.





# Water Quality Monitoring & Assessment Activities for 2024

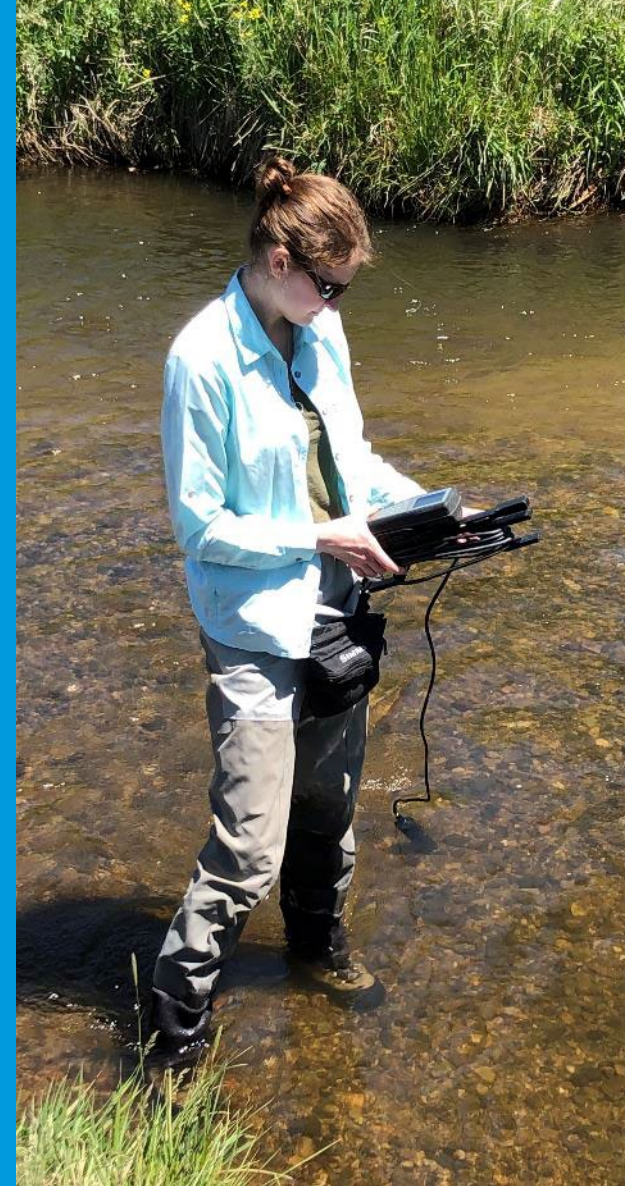
- Darrin Kron, Monitoring & Assessment Section Supervisor



# Water Quality Monitoring & Assessment Activities

Darrin Kron, Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Section Supervisor

- Next IR submittal will be a combined 2022/2024
  - 2023 call for data and assessment work
  - Data organization and analysis
  - Delayed submittal
    - Implementing additional pollutant assessment methods this IR
  - DEQ will assess nutrients in a future addendum to the IR after a path forward for the standard is determined.



# Water Quality Monitoring & Assessment Activities

Ongoing Monitoring or 303(d) Assessment Projects:

## Data Analysis for IR

- Yellowstone River
- Upper Missouri River
- Smith River
- South Fork Judith
- Rattlesnake Cr
- Bitterroot Focus Area
- Volunteer Monitoring Data
- Big Spring Creek
- Lake Kooconusa/Kootenai River
- Clark Canyon Reservoir
- Lake Mary Ronan
- Kennedy Cr
- Lake Kooconusa/Kootenai River
- Mike Horse Mine area
- Prickly Pear Creek
- Libby Asbestos Superfund data
- Troy Mine data
- others

## Monitoring

- Clarks Fork of Yellowstone
- Gallatin River
- Gallatin Focus Area
- Volunteer Monitoring Support
- Clark Fork River Trends
- Bitterroot River Trends

~100 Assessment Units  
~1300 Parameter/AU evaluations  
Not all have sufficient data





# Water Quality Monitoring & Assessment Activities

## Assessment Method Development:

### In public comment

- Dissolved Oxygen – All waters
- Ammonia – All waters
- Selenium – Lake Koocanusa/Kootenai R

Public comment closes Oct 6<sup>th</sup>.

Available at: <https://deq.mt.gov/News/pressrelease-folder/news-article-Assessment-Methods-2024>

### Next Year

- pH
- Bioaccumulating Substances – Fish Tissue (Mercury, PCBs, Dioxins, other)
- Temperature
- Sediment (update)
- Habitat

On Horizon: Eutrophication: Wadeable streams (update), Large Rivers, Lakes/Reservoirs (including HABs)





# STAG Feedback / Discussion

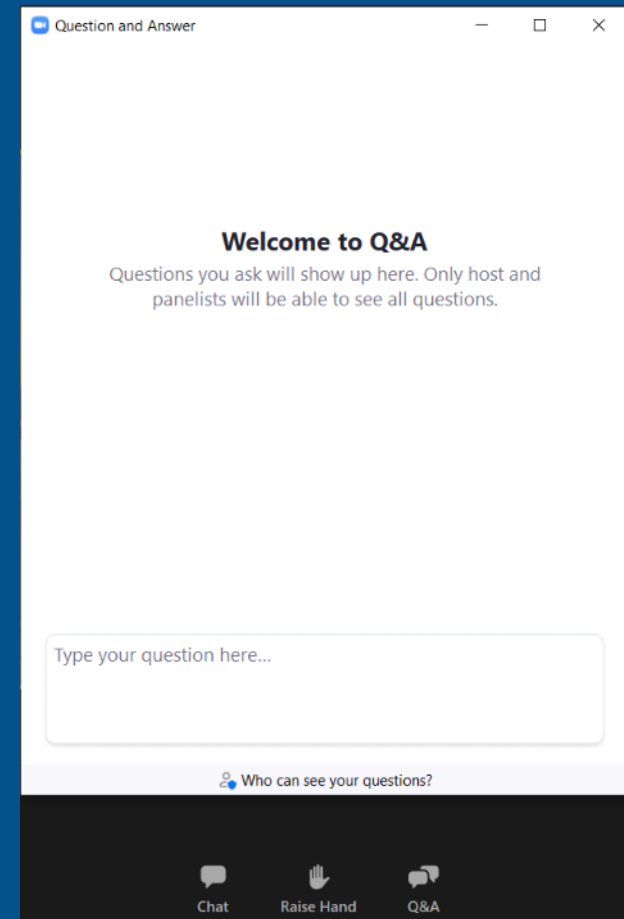
# Close of Meeting

- Discussion of Next Meeting Topics and Meeting Date
- Public Comment



# Questions/ Comments

- Raise hand (\*9 if on the phone) or type questions into the Q&A
- DEQ will unmute you if you wish to provide your comment orally
- If calling by phone, press\*6 to unmute
- State your name and affiliation before providing your comment



Unmute

Chat

Raise Hand

Q&A

Leave



# Thanks for Joining Us

Contact:

Christina Staten, CStaten@mt.gov



<https://deq.mt.gov/water/councils>