

2026 April Water Year Type Categorization – Presented for Informational Purposes

To: Parties to the CSKT-MT Compact

From: CSKT-MT Compact Implementation Technical Team (CITT)

Date: April 15, 2026

Re: 2026 Water Year Type Categorization

Background

The Compact Implementation Technical Team (CITT) is tasked with developing water management planning tools to support Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP) Water Management and Adaptive Management per Appendix 3.5, 3.e of the CSKT-MT Compact. This document provides a categorization of water year type pursuant to both Appendix 3.5 and Appendix 3.7 for determination of wet, normal, and dry years.

When water allocations including Minimum Enforceable Flows (MEFs), Target Instream Flows (TIFs), River Diversion Allowances (RDAs) become enforceable, CITT shall categorize water year type at each meeting from April-June, annually. Because MEFs, TIFs, and RDAs are not enforceable at this time, this document was prepared for informational purposes and to meet the CITT's responsibility to provide water management planning.

Water Year Type Projection

Per Appendix 3.5, CITT shall categorize water year type April-June, annually. At the April 15, 2026 meeting, CITT categorized the Jocko Area as a Normal Year, the Mission Area as a Normal Year, and the Little Bitterroot Area as a Normal Year.

Water Year Type

Referred to as Hydrological Condition in Appendix 3.7, this is the CITT determination of wet, normal, and dry year for the Jocko, Mission, and Little Bitterroot Areas based on indicator gage data.

This water year type categorization was made using data from the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) streamflow forecast for April 1, 2026 and the exceedance probability tables in Appendix 3.7. A summary of the data used to make the water year type determination can be found in Table 1 of this report. The water year categorization below includes the seven gages listed in Appendix 3.7 that have an associated NRCS forecast.

The reference period of 1983-2002 was used to define volumetric wet, normal, and dry year determinations, as outlined in Appendix 3.7. Data from this reference period was used for the seven gaging sites to determine the threshold of wet (<20% exceedance level), normal (20%- 80% exceedance) and dry (>80% exceedance) years as shown on the right side of Table 1. The left side of Table 1 shows the forecast for the 70th, 50th, and 30th percentile exceedance values of the gages listed in Appendix 3.7. In April, the NRCS volumetric forecast is used to determine April – July projections. The % Median column shows a comparison of the forecast to the 30-year median. In this report, the 50th percentile exceedance value is used to determine water year type.

Table 1: April 2026 Water Year NRCS Streamflow Forecast								
Geographic Area	Gage Site	April NRCS Forecast				Site-Specific Water Year Thresholds		
		70%	50%	30%	% Median	Dry Year	Normal Year	Wet Year
Jocko	South Fork Jocko near Arlee	30,000	34,000	37,000	97%	<24,000	24,000 - 36,000	>36,000
	Agency Creek	5,100	5,600	6,200	92%	<4,640	4,640-6,880	>6,880
Mission	Hellroaring Creek	3,600	4,000	4,400	98%	<3,350	3,350-4,750	>4,750
	North Crow Creek near Ronan	16,300	18,000	19,700	102%	<14,400	14,400-22,700	>22,700
	South Crow Creek near Ronan	9,400	10,400	11,400	102%	<7,700	7,700 - 11,800	>11,800
	Mission Creek	23,000	25,000	27,000	96%	<21,100	21,100 - 29,000	>29,000
Little Bitterroot	Mill Creek above Bassoo Creek near Niarada	2,700	3,200	3,900	68%	<2,200	2,200 - 4,900	>4,900
		Wet						
		Normal						*all values are in acre feet
		Dry						

Jocko Area

The 50% exceedance level of both forecast points in the Jocko Area forecast are within the range defined as a Normal Year. These projections represent 97% (South Fork Jocko River) and 92% (Agency Creek) of the 30-year median. CITT is categorizing the Jocko Area as a Normal Year for April 2026.

Mission Area

The 50% exceedance level for all four forecast points in the Mission Area are within the range defined as a Normal Year. These projections represent 98% (Hellroaring), 102% (North Crow Creek), 102% (South Crow Creek), and 96% (Mission Creek) of the 30-year median. CITT is categorizing the Mission Area as a Normal Year for April 2026.

Little Bitterroot Area

The 50% exceedance level of the forecast point in the Little Bitterroot Area forecast is on the low end of the range defined as a Normal Year. This projection represents 62% (Mill Creek) of the 30-year median. It is noted that the NRCS forecasts for the previous two years have over-estimated flows in Mill Creek; however, the CITT is relying the guidelines from Appendix 3.7 and is categorizing the Little Bitterroot Area as a Normal Year for April 2026.

Considerations and Limitations

- NRCS Forecasts for the April-July time period were selected, consistent with the hydrologic condition procedures outlined in Appendix 3.7.
- CITT uses 3rd party data and analyses to inform and support Water Year Type categorizations. CITT does not independently vet the accuracy of 3rd party information.
- The FIIP Project Operator and other interested parties should continually monitor snowpack, weather, and appropriate forecasts to inform real-time water management activities.
- At this time, this categorization is presented for informational purposes. Specific management decisions should be based on additional information, the most current forecast data, experience, and professional judgement.
- The CITT intends to continue these water year type categorizations as full implementation of the MEF, RDA, and other enforceable flow rates approaches.