



A community visit to Lincoln County in Northwest Montana allowed Traci Sears to capture this photo of Big Cherry Creek - a tributary to Libby Creek and the Kootenai River.



CAP PREPARES FOR ANOTHER YEAR

A MESSAGE FROM TRACI SEARS



As the July 4th holiday approaches, the DNRC Floodplain Community Assistance Program (CAP) is celebrating as we wrap up the 2023-2024 funding year on June 30th. Our new program year starts on July 1st. Recovery and permitting from June 2022 flood still continues. In addition, Montana has a new model floodplain ordinance (updated in early 2024 with federal regulations and recommendations). In the next few years, we will be reaching out to all 137 Montana communities who participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) asking them to update their local floodplain hazard management regulations.

A majority of the DNRC Floodplain team just returned from a week of training and presentations at the national conference for the Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) in Salt Lake City, Utah. Over 1,600 members attended in person so it was a good opportunity to network, meet new colleagues, learn about new programs and techniques, and network with old friends. A variety of topics were covered including: FEMA's new revisions to the NFIP and CRS programs, mitigation projects and funding, risk map and communications, and high level engineering. Vendors showed off the latest flood control products and software tools.

During the year, I find this knowledge and rapport building useful as we work with local communities and field questions on floodplain management. Often times I reach out to FEMA and fellow state coordinators for ideas and answers and I am thankful we can help each other. The goal of this newsletter is to be a useful resource. There are articles, information, and messaging on how to better understand flood risk and communicate with Montana communities and property owners to plan and prepare more efficiently.

NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS

The 1964 Flood - 60th Anniversary

Floodplain Permitting and Assistance - DNRC Floodplain Regional Engineers

Disaster Preparedness
Flood After Fire

Montana - River and Streams - Can you identify?

Climate Smart Practices - Rain Gardens and Rural Stormwater Solutions

Around the Floodplain

Education and Training Events

DNRC Floodplain Contacts

1964 Montana Flood

60 Year Anniversary

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The state of Montana is no stranger to major flooding events, with documented floods from 1881 to the most recent in 2023. These events were witnessed statewide in cities such as Billings, Lewiston, Great Falls, and Ekalaka.

This year, 2024, marks the 60th anniversary of the 1964 flood. This flood was the largest flood in the state and made the greatest impact in reshaping the landscape and countless lives of the “Big Sky Country” in northwestern and north-central Montana. Final estimates were \$55 million in damages, 30 lives lost, 350 injuries, and 8,700 people evacuated. Of the 30 lost, most were children and all but one occurred on the Blackfeet Reservation³.

The disastrous floods came following a deadly combination of unusually heavy snowpack, rapid thawing, and relentless rainfalls. Precipitation during the 36-hour storm from June 7th through the 8th was as much as 14 inches, only adding to the already high-water levels from late snowmelt runoffs.

The rivers and tributaries on both sides of the Continental Divide exceeded their bank limits, inundating vast areas of land and communities all along the Hudson Bay basin, Missouri River basin, and the Columbia River basin. Peak discharges were anywhere from 2 to 115 times the probable 50-year flood levels. By June 11th, nine counties were declared federal disaster areas and both the Swift Dam (west of Dupuyer), and the Lower Medicine Dam (on Two Medicine Creek) failed⁴.



Figure 1: Aerial view of the 1964 flood in Lewiston, MT (Source: MT DNRC)



Figure 2: Holy Family Mission on Blackfeet Reservation surrounded by flood waters during 1964 Flood (Source: MT State Library¹)

The worst damage occurred approximately 100-miles northwest of Great Falls on the Blackfeet Reservation. Telephone connections were lost, washed-out roads and bridges physically isolated the tribal community, and the state lacked awareness of the crisis upstream. Great Falls had at least 24-hours' notice to evacuate whereas the Blackfeet residents had no advanced warning. This left many families trapped, surrounded by rising waters, and no help to come for days. Most of the victims were children, swept away by currents too strong even for boats. Full recovery took 2 years, but most residents had no homes to return to².

Sites with irrigation and flood-control reservoirs helped to reduce the flood peaks while the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), in coordination with partner agencies, monitored river levels and weather patterns leading up to and during the flood events. Choteau, Helena, Great Falls, Missoula, and Cascade were some of the communities where residents evacuated as rivers rose to dangerous levels.

Following the floods, USACE teams inspected multiple levees working to reinforce, repair, and prevent further flooding. As flood waters subsided, USACE conducted damage assessments, additional precipitation studies, and prioritized resources and funding for infrastructure restoration.

Through its expertise in engineering, planning, and emergency management, USACE continues to be a key partner in protecting communities from the impacts of flooding in Montana and across the United States.

Flood control systems, early warning systems, and condition monitoring are the first steps in safeguarding communities against the destructive power of floods. The 1964 flood serves as just one of the many reminders for the importance of flood awareness and building flood resiliency.

Interagency partnerships have been instrumental in communicating and reducing flood risk throughout the state. The state-led Silver Jacket team brings together state, federal, tribal, and local agencies to share knowledge, data, and experiences to reduce flood risk throughout the states. One goal of the Silver Jacket team is educational outreach of historic floods within the State. In 2016, the Silver Jacket team developed an interactive Story Map detailing historic floods throughout the state. The storyboards are a compilation of photographs and descriptions of the devastation caused by major flood events and are a comprehensive resource and flood awareness tool. To access the storyboard and learn more about the 1964 Flood and other floods throughout the state, visit https://rsgisias.crrel.usace.army.mil/story_maps/now/silverjackets/mt/index.html

Figure 3: Flooding on 2nd Ave South, Lewiston, MT (1964)



References:

¹Hell or high water: Floods in Montana. Montana History Portal. (n.d.). <https://www.mtmemory.org/nodes/view/101478>

²Parrett, A. (2004). Natural disaster: the 1064 flood on the blackfeet indian reservation. Magazine of Western History, Summer, 21–31.

³Boner, F. C., & Stermitz, F. (1967). Floods of June 1964 in Northwestern Montana. US Gov. Print. Off.

⁴FAL. (2014, May 25). Montana floods devastated state in 1964. Great Falls Tribune. <https://www.greatfallstribune.com/story/news/local/2014/05/25/montana-floods-devastated-state-in-1964/9562575/>

Figure 4: This highwater signage near Great Falls, MT records the 1964 flood events was designed and placed by the MT Silver Jackets team

GREAT FALLS, MT

JUNE 9, 1964

On this day, the Missouri River, the Sun River and other nearby tributaries, which were already running high, swelled as torrential rain fell onto a late and higher than normal snowpack. Millions of cubic feet of water was unleashed in a 24-hour period. Floods across Montana in June 1964 left one-fifth of the state under varying depths of water and caused more than \$50 million in damages.

Upstream, Swift Dam on Birch Creek had failed and was sending a 30-foot wall of water toward Great Falls. Later that day, Two Medicine Dam failed.

Great Falls was among those areas left inundated with 8,700 people evacuated from their homes and 265 homes destroyed. Among the shelters was Browning High School. The typhoid vaccine was dispatched to a number of cities where community drinking water was polluted.

The flood water swept away families, horses and herds of cattle. Nearby, on the Blackfeet Reservation, 30 people died and bridges and roads on the reservation were washed out.





Photo courtesy: City of Great Falls, MT



HISTORICAL MARKER

Silver Jackets brings together federal, state, and local agencies to collaborate in reducing flood risk. To learn more about Montana's flood history and how you can prepare your family visit: floodrisk.mt.gov/

⁵U.S. Army Engineer Institute for Water Resources (IWR). (n.d.). 2018 Silver Jackets Team of the Year: Montana. Silver Jackets. <https://www.iwr.usace.army.mil/Silver-Jackets/>

⁶Story map tour. Remote Sensing/GIS Center of Expertise - Projects. (n.d.). https://rsgisias.crrel.usace.army.mil/story_maps/now/silverjackets/mt/index.html



“Many Partners, One Team”

**together we can build
awareness and resiliency
for the future.**

FLOODPLAIN PERMITTING AND ASSISTANCE

ASSISTANCE FOR MONTANA'S NFIP COMMUNITIES



Montana's Regional Engineers

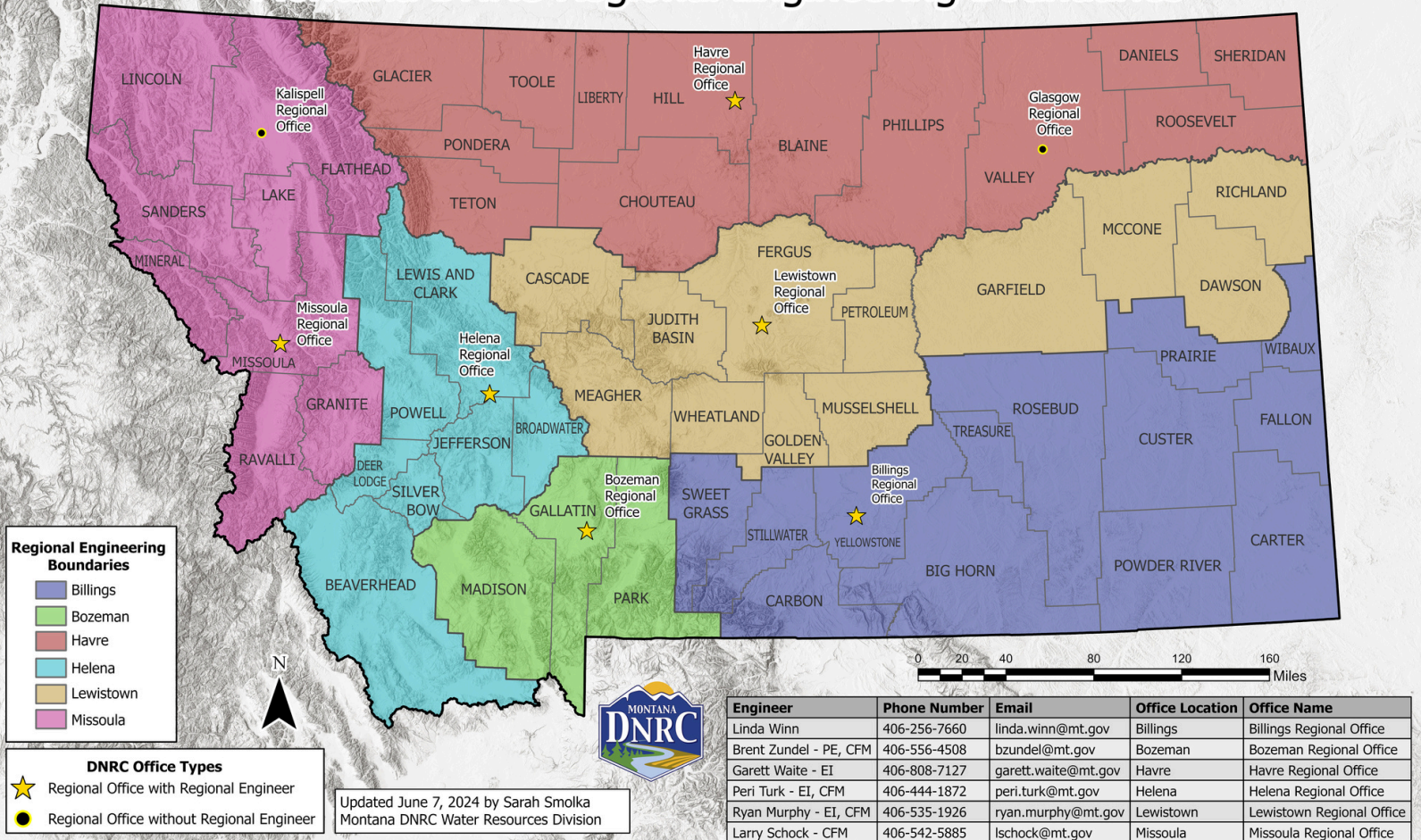
Provide a wide range of technical expertise and assistance to Montana communities - including high-hazard dam safety inspections, water right decisions, and working with community officials, dam, and property owners. Most important to the floodplain program is the mapping, community, and permitting assistance they provide. As professional engineers they have knowledge and expertise in hydrology, hydraulics, surveying, geotechnical engineering and construction methods. They certainly work closely and make the job easier for many of our local floodplain administrators (FPAs). Below is a map to assist local FPAs in knowing who to contact for help.

SEE Page 10 for more information about:

Garrett Waite - Havre Regional Engineer and Mickey Navidomskis - Floodplain Engineer

SITE VISITS
EXPERTISE
TECHNICAL PERMIT REVIEWS

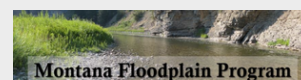
Montana DNRC Regional Engineering Boundaries



Disaster Preparedness

Flood After Fire

For information specific to Montana flood after fires, communities, and regulations - **CLICK the logo for link.**



Montana Flood After Fire Guidebook



Are you prepared for flood risk after fire?

Wildfires can remove vegetation and leave ground charred and unable to absorb water creating the perfect conditions for flash flooding and debris flows. As rainwater moves across charred and barren ground, it can pickup soil and sediment and carry it in a stream of floodwaters, which can lead to more severe damage following a fire (FEMA FloodSmart).

Understand your risk by assessing the terrain around your home and community for burn scars, or the areas that were impacted by the fire. Areas of concern include burned terrain on upstream and uphill slopes.

After rainstorms, post-wild-fire conditions along normally dry ravines, river channels, gullies and creeks become active with increased water movement, and now may carry additional debris, topsoil and runoff. These denser materials traveling at a faster rate combine to create highly destructive debris flows (Figure 2).

The increase flood risk can persist for years following a fire until the landscape recovers and vegetation begins to reestablish itself in the burn scar area. After several the vegetation should regrow and soils return to their normal state which lowers the risk considerably.



Identify flood-prone or landslide-prone areas near you.



Know flood evacuation routes near you.



Know your community's warning signals, evacuation routes, and emergency shelter locations.

WILDFIRE BURN SCARS ARE A FLOOD RISK

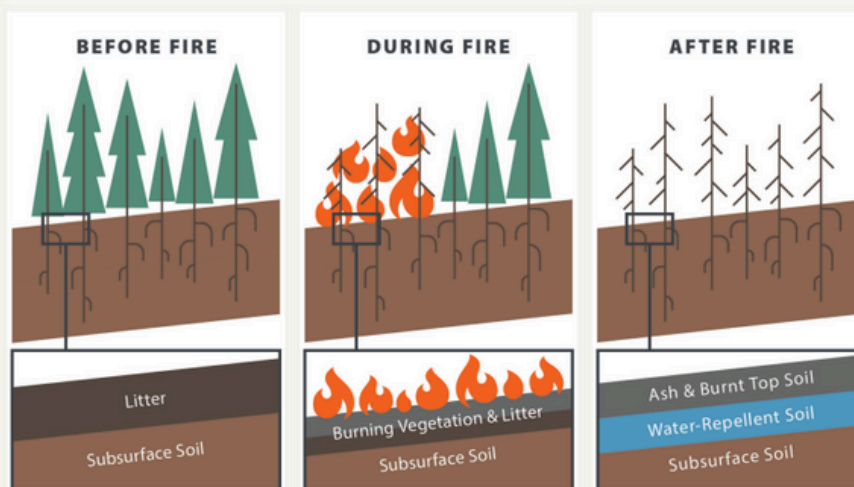
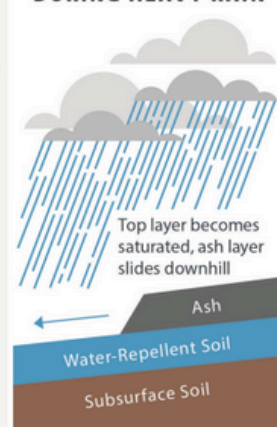


FIGURE 1 Changes in a landscape resulting from a wildfire.

DURING HEAVY RAIN



Water cannot penetrate the water-repellent soil layer and runs off the soil as if it were pavement, which could cause dangerous flash flooding, mud and debris flow.



NEVADA FLOOD AFTER FIRE GUIDE | 5

Post-Fire Landscapes CAN Flood

Floods are the most common and costly natural hazard in the nation. Whether caused by heavy rain, thunderstorms, or winter storms, the results of flooding can be devastating. While some floods develop over time, flash floods—particularly common after wildfires—can occur within minutes after the onset of a rainstorm. Even areas that are not traditionally flood-prone are at risk, due to changes to the landscape caused by fire. Residents should protect their homes and personal property with flood insurance —before a weather event. Flood risk remains significantly higher until vegetation is restored—up to 5 years after a wildfire.

Prepare Now. Plan Ahead

Post fire flooding and flood damage is often more severe, as debris and ash left from the fire can form mudflows. As rainwater moves across charred and barren ground, it can also pick up soil and sediment and carry it in a stream of floodwaters causing more significant damage. Residents and business owners are urged to purchase flood insurance to assure financial protection from flooding.

Information and illustrations are sourced from the Nevada Flood After Fire Guide.

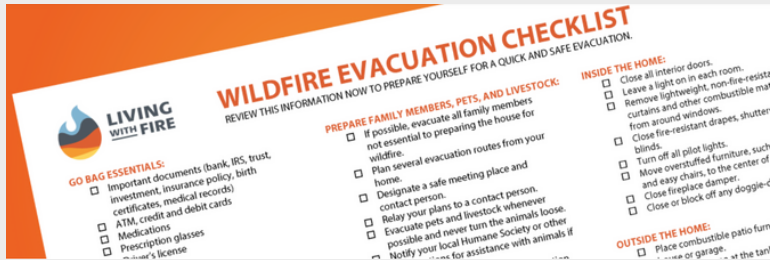


Download

Disaster Preparedness Flood After Fire



Flood after the Deep Creek Fire near Townsend, MT was a continued risk for this residential property. PHOTO: By: Shylea Wingard (July 2021)



You don't have to be a Boy Scout – to be prepared!!

It's the 4th of July! Are you thinking about packing your bags - to escape the flood of tourists or to visit those recreational and mountainous areas that re-fuel our souls, create family memories and give us the reason we put up with winter snow. While you're preparing for your camping trip or vacation get-away, use this opportunity to think about what you would pack and what your evacuation plan would be in the event of a disaster or an emergency.



The odds of flooding increase dramatically in burned areas.

A general rule is that half an inch of rainfall in less than an hour can cause sufficient flash flood and debris flows in a burn area.

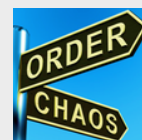
Evacuation Plans - Emergency evacuations don't have to be chaotic. Disaster preparedness is something to discuss and plan. It's effective risk management.

Pets and Livestock Evacuation - is often overlooked, but it is important to have a plan in place and think through the steps that are needed to ensure the safety and welfare of your animals.

"Go-Bags" - Having an easy-to-grab bag makes evacuation and emergencies easier to respond to and ensures everyone has what they need.

What would you take if threatened by a wildfire, flood, or other disaster?
Your "Go Bag" should include:

- Important documents (Medical records, birth certificates, IRS documents, etc.)
- Medications, contacts/glasses
- Cellphone (car charger + battery pack)
- Personal toiletries
- Credit/debit cards and cash in small bills
- Clothing for 3-5 days
- Water and snacks (two-week supply)



For a comprehensive list and more tips, visit:
www.livingwithfire.com

HOW TO STAY SAFE IN A FLOOD



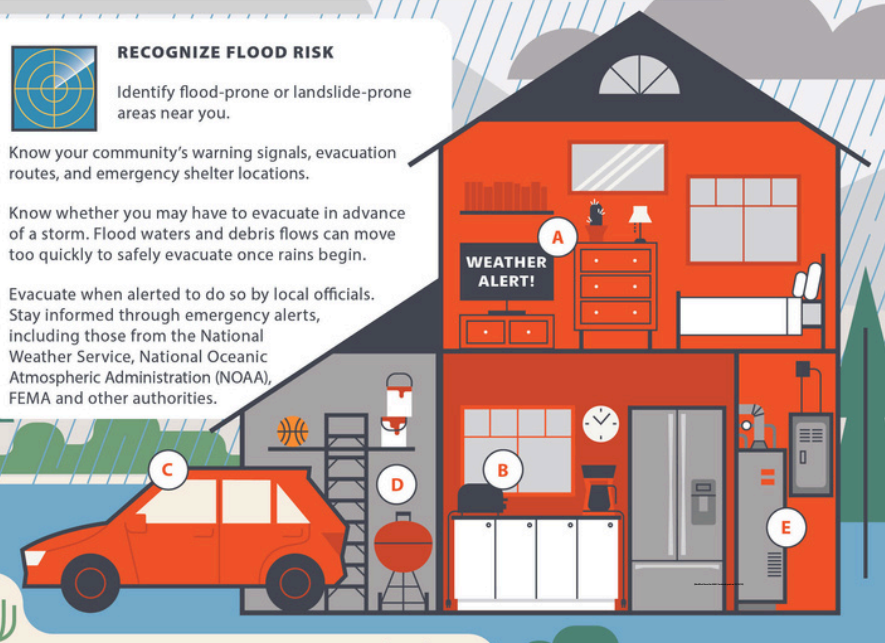
RECOGNIZE FLOOD RISK

Identify flood-prone or landslide-prone areas near you.

Know your community's warning signals, evacuation routes, and emergency shelter locations.

Know whether you may have to evacuate in advance of a storm. Flood waters and debris flows can move too quickly to safely evacuate once rains begin.

Evacuate when alerted to do so by local officials. Stay informed through emergency alerts, including those from the National Weather Service, National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), FEMA and other authorities.



WHAT TO DO DURING A FLOOD

- A** Gather emergency supplies and follow local radio or TV updates.
- B** Unplug appliances to prevent electrical shock when power comes back on.
- C** Do NOT drive or walk across flooded roads. Cars and people can be swept away.
- D** Tie down or bring outdoor items inside.
- E** When powerlines are down, water is in your home, or before you evacuate, TURN OFF gas, power and water.

Montana - Big Sky | Big Rivers

Can you identify these Montana waterways?



ABOVE: 1) The falls on the Yaak River a few miles downstream from the Town of Libby, MT (Photo: T. Sears). 2) This is the serene part of the Yaak River and highlights how quickly conditions can change. (Photo: T. Sears). 3) The Boulder River near Cardwell, MT. (Photo: Shylea). 4) High water marks are clearly visible on this bridge over the Yaak River (Photo: T. Sears). 5) Slightly different view from the same location on the Boulder River near Cardwell, MT. (Photo: Shylea). 6) Swan Lake screams “dip your toes on a hot day”. (Photo: T. Sears).



Property owners can reduce flooding and filter pollutants by establishing a rain garden. Rain gardens are an effective way to manage stormwater runoff. Learn more about raingardens and how to build your own: <https://extension.wsu.edu/raingarden>



Washington State University Extension and the Washington Stormwater Center offer a suite of educational materials to help landowners manage stormwater and reduce runoff in rural areas at: ruralstormwater.wsu.edu

Do you have ponding water in your driveway, unwanted water coursing through the yard, or eroding river banks?

If so, you have a stormwater management challenge! Rural areas often lack city services like storm drains that conveniently carry stormwater away. Most stormwater management efforts have focused on urban watersheds due to the high densities of people, pollutant sources, and impervious areas. However, rural stormwater runoff can harm rural properties and roadways and degrade rural water quality. (WSU Fact Sheet: Understanding Your Site Conditions)

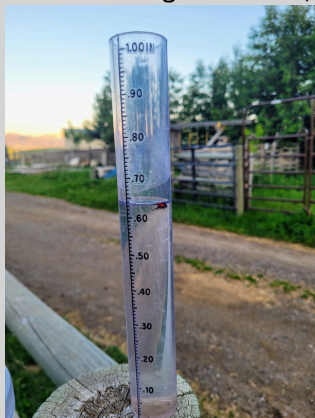
Why is stormwater management important in rural areas?

Rural areas have many high-quality natural resources such as clear, clean streams, healthy forests, open pastures, and abundant wildlife. Poor stormwater management can harm water quality and impact these resources. Curbs, gutters and stormdrains on city streets help reduce flooding and, in some cases, improve water quality. These features are often absent on country roads, rural properties, or smaller subdivisions. Rural areas can flood, even with fewer paved surfaces, fewer homes, and less traffic. Compacted gravel roads, buildings, and farm structures are susceptible to runoff problems and often don't big-city solutions.

Unintended consequences: Clearing native vegetation, interrupting the flow of water, compacting soils, or adding additional impervious surfaces, such as a gravel driveway, changes the way water flows on your property. Altering the water flow can have unintended consequences downstream such as flooded basements, overwhelmed culverts, washed-out roads, and loss of fishery and habitat.

Find solutions: Fortunately, there are solutions to rural stormwater challenges. Many rural residents use swales, dispersion methods, rain gardens and other techniques to manage and infiltrate water on their property. Most options offer drainage problems in rural areas rely on infiltrating water into well-draining soils. If your groundwater is high and stormwater can't infiltrate during the wet months, you may be able to safely convey water across your landscape to a place where it can infiltrate.

Visit: <https://ruralstormwater.wsu.edu/options-for-managing-water/>





NEWS From the Floodplain



Montana FPA Updates

Welcome

Frank "Skip" Cole - Town of Dodson - Mayor/FPA
Jennifer Bailey - Town of Sheridan - Mayor/FPA
Laura Taylor - Meagher County - Deputy DES/FPA

Goodbye / Well Wishes

Charity Yonker - Cascade County - Planning Director/FPA
Rebekah Luchterhand - Meagher County - Commiss. Assist/FPA
Harlie Riddle - Town of Fromberg - Clerk/FPA

Please report personnel updates to:

Traci Sears - CAP Coordinator | tsears@mt.gov | Ph. 406.444.6654
Shylea Wingard - Floodplain Specialist | shylea.wingard@mt.gov

Congrats on your CFM certification



Gary Poore - Cascade County
Building Code & Compliance Inspector

McKenzie Goodenough
State of Utah - Floodplain Planner

Congratulations to Gary and McKenzie! Both participated in the weekly DNRC Floodplain Bootcamp and CFM Prep Course offered December 2023 through May 2024.

Gary offered encouragement and advice at the last class on May 17th, 2024 while McKenzie participated throughout the year sharing how the floodplain programs in Utah and Montana were similar and differed slightly. Thanks to both of you!

Please let Traci or Shylea know if you have received your CFM certification

NEWS FROM THE DNRC FLOODPLAIN TEAM



MICKEY NAVIDOMSKIS
DNRC Floodplain Technical Assistance Engineer



Mickey Navidomskis married his sweetheart, Drue, on June 22nd, and was back at work in the office on June 25th -- a dedicated DNRC employee for sure! The joyful couple will take a delayed honeymoon at a later date. Congratulations!!

Garett Waite
DNRC Regional Engineer - Havre

Hello, I'm Garett, the new Regional Engineer for the Havre office. I graduated from Missouri University of Science and Technology (Missouri S&T for short) with my MS in May. During my time in school, I majored in Geological Engineering and minored in Geology (during my bachelors) and took several philosophy courses. I also worked as a researcher for the USGS in Missouri, using ArcPro to map lake and stream bathymetry. In my free time, I enjoy snowboarding, kayaking, hiking and rafting. I also enjoy trivia. I am excited to be living and working in Montana, and look forward to discovering and trying everything Montana has to offer.

Please welcome Garett to the team – his email address is garett.waite@mt.gov.



DNRC Floodplain Mapping Team
Hannah, Nadene, Doug, Monica and Sarah

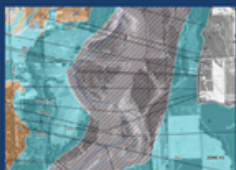
The Floodplain Mapping Program delivered critical information about the Teton County Floodplain Mapping Project at a successful open house-public meeting on May 29th, 2024.

Over 70 residents, public officials and other stakeholders attended the event. Event attendees were able to discuss their properties and any changes that may be shown on the new floodplain maps. Attendees left better informed of their flood risk, community efforts and the amount of work and detail that goes into a mapping project.

For more information about the Teton County mapping project and other DNRC mapping projects around the state, visit:

<https://dnrc.mt.gov/Water-Resources/Floodplains/Floodplain-Mapping-Projects>

Floodplain mapping projects





EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING EVENTS



SAVE THE DATES

MORE INFORMATION -- CONTACT --

Traci Sears: 406.444.6654
tsears@mt.gov

Shylea: 406.581.5254
shylea.wingard@mt.gov



**Montana
Association
of Planners**

Annual Conference
October 7-9th, 2024
Lewistown, MT
<https://mtplanners.org/>

SAVE THE DATE Enforcement Workshop

August 1st, 2024
8:30 am - 11:30 am
Virtual

Watch for an email / Zoom invite
from Shylea

HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY 4TH OF JULY



Registration
Now OPEN



Montana Emergency Managers Association

October 1-3rd, 2024
Butte Civic Center

Registration is open!

Montana Emergency Managers
Association - MEMA 2024
Conference (wildapricot.org)

NEW MONTANA CADASTRAL VERSION

The Montana State Library announced
in official released a new public
version of the Montana Cadastral web
application in April 2024.

The new site is located at:

<https://svc.mt.gov/mst/cadastral/>



Highlights include:

- Mobile device (phone and tablet) friendly
- Improved map performance
- New base map options
- Improved printing

Flood Preparedness Includes

Mitigation

is taking steps to reduce the
impact of future floods.

Resilience

is the ability to withstand or
quickly recover from a flood.

Much of the State received a wet spring snowstorm on June 18th, 2024. This photo was taken on the Virginia City Hill while performing a community visit. (Photo by: S. Wingard)



Web-based Training for Floodplain Administrators

Want to learn floodplain management basics?

Don't have time to attend a 4-day course?

Want to brush up on 1 or 2 floodplain topics?

MONTANA HIGHGROUND NEWSLETTER

Your source for floodplain regulations
and permitting information, workshop and training
events, FEMA guidance, administrative



Northwest Montana's
Yaak River
(Photo: Traci Sears)

QUESTIONS? Need Assistance? Contact...



Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
FLOODPLAIN PROGRAM
www.floodplain.mt.gov

Updated
06/06/2024.

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FLOODPLAIN ENGINEER

Mickey Navidomskis

Floodplain Tech. Assistance Engineer

Not assigned

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BILLINGS REGIONAL OFFICE

1371 Rimtop Dr, Billings, MT 59105-1978

Linda Winn
Regional Engineering Specialist
406-256-7660 | linda.winn@mt.gov

Counties served: Bighorn, Carbon, Carter, Custer, Fallon, Powder River, Prairie, Rosebud, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Treasure, Wibaux, Yellowstone

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Brent Zundel – PE, CFM
Regional Engineering Specialist
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Counties served: Gallatin, Madison, Park

HAVRE REGIONAL OFFICE

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Garett Waite – EI
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Counties served: Beaverhead, Broadwater, Deer Lodge, Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, Powell, Silver Bow

LEWISTOWN REGIONAL OFFICE

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Counties served: Cascade, Dawson, Fergus, Garfield, Golden Valley, Judith Basin, McCone, Meagher, Musselshell, Petroleum, Richland, Wheatland

MISSOULA REGIONAL OFFICE

2705 Spurgin Road Bldg C, PO Box 5004, Missoula, MT 59806-5004

Larry Schock – CFM
Regional Engineering Specialist
(406) 721-4284 | lschock@mt.gov

Counties served: Flathead, Granite, Lake, Lincoln, Mineral, Missoula, Ravalli, Sanders



MONTANA DISASTER AND EMERGENCY SERVICES
Hazard Mitigation Program
Sara Hartley, SHMO
(406) 417-9238 | Sara.Hartley@mt.gov



Federal Emergency Management Agency
Flood Maps
<https://www.fema.gov/flood-maps>

MISSED A NEWSLETTER?

<https://dnrc.mt.gov/Water-Resources/Floodplains/News>

The Montana Highground Newsletter
is a quarterly publication of the
DNRC Floodplain Community Assistance
Program (CAP).

The Montana Highground Newsletter
welcomes your articles, information,
ideas, projects, and photos.

Please email your contributions to:
shylea.wingard@mt.gov

Electronic distribution is made via
email and circulated to over 600
recipients. To be added to the
distribution list or to submit an article or
information for publication, please
contact:

Shylea | DNRC Floodplain
shylea.wingard@mt.gov

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JUNE 2024 - DNRC FLOODPLAIN