



## Water Programs: Annual Work Plan (AWP) and Long Range Plans

If your conservation district has not added water related programs to your AWP and LRP, you might want to consider amending your plans. Having your plans updated to fully reflect the amount of time, work and activities may surprise you--with this area of CD work!

- Water Quality
- Water Quantity
- 310 Program
- Watersheds

Establishing a **water quality program** can be important and invaluable for your conservation district. Having locally generated water quality information empowers your conservation district, your watershed groups, local land owners and land managers. Knowing the health of your streams and water bodies is important as you monitor waters and the health of your watershed as a whole. Years ago, the EPA and state DEQ organizations established Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL's). Often TMDL's were associated with Animal Feeding Operations (AFO) and Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) and proximity adjacent to streams and water bodies, as well as any other point / non-point sources that impacted water quality. Conservation districts nation-wide began gathering water samples at upper reaches of streams and water bodies, mid-point and lower stretches to begin gathering data on water quality. The effort has helped in knowing the water quality data sets and working with land owners and land managers with technical and funding resources to improve the water quality county and conservation district jurisdiction wide.

**Water Quantity** programs are often associated with aquifers and ground water recharge. Several conservation districts work with the State Engineer's office, the Montana DNRC with any and all ground water concerns, issues and activities. For more information, contact MT DNRC at [dnrc.mt.gov](http://dnrc.mt.gov) and learn more about the State Water Plan, regional river basins, programs/projects/studies, reports and training & education. The Water Rights Bureau in Helena and Water Resource Regional offices (Billings, Bozeman, Glasgow, Havre, Helena, Lewistown and Missoula) have additional staffing resources and technical information.

**Water reservation applications** from irrigators are submitted to the conservation district and advanced to the Miles City (232-6359) or the Glasgow (228-4129) DNRC CARDD Water Reservation Technical Advisor's Offices. A detailed development plan is completed, signed off by the irrigator and is final approved by the conservation district. Conservation Districts may expand their Water Quantity Programs in concert with the USDA NRCS Work Plan / CD Annual Plan of Work.

Under the water quantity program, **irrigation efficiency** is something that CD's and USDA Service Centers work with on a regular basis. Having technical resources for irrigators is critical to providing information and education. **Irrigation efficiency workshops** are a great way to bring DNRC, Irrigation Districts and USDA NRCS technical staff to the irrigators and provide information for water savings.

**310 Applications and Project Management** is a CD role and activity. The 310 program is also known as *The Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act*, also known as the "The 310 Law" administered by the conservation districts. The purpose of the 310 law is to keep rivers and streams in as natural or existing condition as possible, to minimize sedimentation and to recognize beneficial uses. Any individual or corporation proposing construction in a perennial stream must apply for a 310 permit through the local conservation district. For more information, contact Jason Garber, Stream Permitting Coordinator, at (406) 444-4340 and/or [Jason.Garber@mt.gov](mailto:Jason.Garber@mt.gov).

**Watershed programs and projects** are an important component of all conservation districts. If your CD has not organized watershed groups and integrated the full breadth of natural resources planning, you may want to begin with establishing focus groups to bring together land owners, land managers and other natural resource partners to the table. Developing watershed GIS maps, taking inventory of the resources, facilitating the stake holders inventory of challenges and opportunities can be a great component in your overall Annual Plan of Work and Long Range Plans. Conservation districts with established watershed groups have an advantage to CD's that do not. Often when CD's are applying for grants and other funding can leverage greater levels of funds through watershed natural resource projects.

For more information on any water related program, project and/or activity, contact DNRC for assistance!