

Resolution: 21-02

Sheridan County Groundwater Monitoring Resolution

Submitted by Sheridan County CD, 2021

WHEREAS, According to MCA Code 85-2-316, the state, any political subdivision or agency of the state, may apply to the department to acquire a state water reservation for existing or future beneficial use. Furthermore, the Department has the ability to modify existing water reservations. There are currently 36 Districts that have been entrusted with water reservations; and

WHEREAS, buried valley aquifers in northeastern Montana are critical sources of groundwater for irrigation development; and this development has increased agricultural production in Sheridan, Richland, and Roosevelt counties, among others; and concerns over the frequency of droughts increases the interest in irrigation development; and

WHEREAS, groundwater monitoring activities benefit water users by defining the areas where aquifer water is usable for irrigation versus marginal or unusable water quality or quantity. It is important to understand the water quality and quantity limits of irrigation development to prevent producers the expense associated with attempting to develop unusable parts of these aquifers; and only producing from the sustainable portions of the aquifer; and

WHEREAS, long-term groundwater monitoring has proven to be an essential tool for aquifer management allowing the current level of development from the Clear Lake aquifer in Sheridan County, while preventing any negative impacts to other water users or the aquifer. However, responsible management requires continued long term data to adequately drive groundwater modeling; and

WHEREAS, the need for long-term monitoring requires long-term funding and asking the legislature for funding every two years is cost and time prohibitive; and short term funding grants and sources are unpredictable and unreliable; Unsecured funding sources make quality employees hard to find and retain when funding sources are unknown; and

NOW THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the Montana Association of Conservation Districts aggressively pursues additional funding for current water reservations and support Sheridan County Conservation District and any other District who has active groundwater reservations.

NOW THEREFORE LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that MACD actively encourage DNRC Water Resources Division to pursue the ability to expand current groundwater reservations and, or, the

creation of new water reservations, where the preponderance of evidence shows there is additional water available for agriculture use.