



Resolution 26-10

Resolution type: Policy Statement

DNRC Database for Required Water Usage Reports

Submitted by: Richland County CD

BACKGROUND DESCRIBING ISSUE

Ground water permits granted by the State of Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation are required to keep written monthly records of the flow rate and volume of all water diverted, including the period of time. Records are to be submitted by January 31 of each year and upon request at other times during the year. Failure to submit reports may be cause for revocation of permit or change. The records must be sent to the Water Resources Regional Office.

These reports are submitted and placed in the file of the water right by number. If you are trying to monitor an aquifer, you need to spend time and effort finding each of these water usage reports for each water right. The information is virtually useless to aid in the health of the aquifer. If the data was put into a data base the information could be compiled and a true picture of the water usage would be available for entities monitoring each aquifer.

Whereas the State of Montana and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation administers the permitting process for new water rights and changes in existing water rights.

Whereas the Department also oversees water rights ownership updates; maintenance of the constitutionally mandated centralized water rights database; and implementation of data quality standards for entry of water rights information into the database.

Whereas the Department requires a form provided by the department, the appropriator shall keep a written monthly record of the flow rate and volume of all water diverted, including the period of time.

Whereas the records are submitted on a yearly basis and failure to submit may result in revocation of permit or change. Records must be sent to the Water Resources regional office.

Whereas these submitted records are currently scanned to the water right file and not entered into any type of database.

Whereas stakeholders have to research each water right and compile the information themselves through the water right query system.

Whereas the water resources mission is to help ensure Montana's land and water resources provide benefits for present and future generations This involves balancing current water needs with long-term sustainability, supporting both human and environmental uses, and adapting to changing conditions such as drought and climate impacts.

ACTUAL POLICY STATEMENT TO BE INCLUDED IN MACD POLICY BOOK IF ADOPTED

DNRC Water Resources should develop a repository for water usage information that could be used by stakeholders, for research, water monitoring, modeling of aquifers, and drought situations.

IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

MACD should work with DNRC Water Resources to make the necessary recommendations to update administrative rules to implement a database to include the water usage reports submitted to them.

SPONSOR(S) ACTIONS TO DATE

Richland County CD has reached out to the DNRC Glasgow Field Office and the Science Division of DNRC Water Resources. Here are their responses:

Any metering and water use reporting that is submitted to DNRC is scanned to the water right file and is available for download. To my knowledge, we do not have a repository that is available for stakeholders to access compiled data from the Water Rights Database. A user would have to compile those records themselves through the Water Right Query System.

- Evan Norman, Science Division

I would just add that 1) the regional office enters the measurement data into the DNRC database as well; 2) Not so much for physical and legal availability analysis (because the permit is already issued), but the measurement data are used by DNRC at Project Completion Notice stage to evaluate the amount of water actually perfected by the permit holder.

- Lih-An Yang, Glasgow Water Resources

Loss of historic data is another good reason to utilize a database for usage information.

HOW WILL YOUR DISTRICT CONTINUE TO SUPPORT AND BE INVOLVED WITH THIS POLICY STATEMENT/STANCE?

The Richland County Conservation District would support the efforts to implement this database by educating other districts on the necessity and benefits of the database. We would also be available for any input the Water Resources Subcommittee may need on drafts and final versions.

ARE THERE ANY EXISTING MACD POLICIES THAT THIS WOULD IMPACT OR INTERACT WITH?

Not that we know of.

HOW WOULD THIS POLICY IMPACT MACD?

Time working with DNRC on potential solutions to implement the resolution.

WOULD THIS POLICY STATEMENT IMPACT THE STATE BUDGET? IF SO, HOW?

If there is not current capacity within DNRC, an additional FTE may need to be allocated.

MEETING AND DATE ADOPTED BY SPONSORING ENTITY

Richland County Conservation District monthly meeting, September 9, 2026

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE(S) AND TITLE(S)

Shawn Conradsen, Richland County CD Board Chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shawn Conradsen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.