



William Bunch
Aquatic Resource Protection and Accountability Unit
EPA Region 8
1595 Wynkoop Ave.
Denver, CO 80202-1129

December 7, 2017

Dear Billy,

Attached, please find Montana Department of Environmental Quality's Wetland Program Plan addendum for calendar year 2019 and 2020. The addendum includes two charts. The first shows several revised program development actions that are more in line with the actions we plan to take and the second shows WPP actions that we intend to continue or start in the next two years.

To help put our Wetland Program Plan (WPP) into context, you'll recall that Montana DEQ leads the development of state-wide wetland and riparian conservation planning via the Montana Wetland Council. Our current plan is titled "Priceless Resources: A Strategic Framework for Wetland and Riparian Conservation and Restoration in Montana 2013-2017". DEQ's WPP references the Strategic Framework and identifies, in part, the unique actions that DEQ takes responsibility for to collectively achieve the overall state goal of "no overall loss of the state's remaining wetland resource base (as of 1989) and an overall increase in the quality and quantity of wetlands in Montana". The Strategic Framework also specifies Montana's riparian goal as "maintain, protect, and restore the ecological integrity of riparian areas."

In addition to identifying 2019 and 2020 priority actions, another reason we're requesting the two-year WPP addendum is to synch the timing of Montana's state-wide Strategic Framework with DEQ's Wetland Program Plan. We intend to support the Wetland Council to assess the 2013-2017 Strategic Framework and update for the next five year timeframe. We also plan to assess DEQ's Wetland Program Plan and update to include and go beyond the Strategic Framework timing. You will find the updated WPP as a revised action listed in the first chart. Finally, the addendum request more clearly describes the integration work that the Wetland Program is advancing with other Clean Water Act programs at DEQ.

Please feel free to contact Stephen Carpenedo, contact listed below, should you have questions or comments.

Sincerely,

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The DEQ Wetland Program provides state leadership to conserve wetlands for their water quality, water quantity, habitat, and flood risk reduction benefits.

Amendments to Montana DEQ Wetland Program Plan 2011-2018 for Calendar Years 2019 and 2020.

Submitted to EPA Region VIII on 12/7/2017.

P = Priority action identified by Montana Department of Environmental Quality to be undertaken during either calendar year (CY) 2019 or 2020.

REVISED ACTION ITEMS		
WPD GRANT PERIOD	CY 2019	CY 2020
MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT		
13. Collaboratively integrate wetlands into DEQ's watershed restoration implementation framework.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
WETLAND WATER QUALITY STANDARDS AND REGULATORY ACTIONS		
15. Develop and incorporate wetland functional approaches into watershed planning.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
SUSTAINABLE FINANCING AND EFFECTIVENESS		
3. Support the Montana Wetland Council to assess the 2013-2017 Strategic Framework and update.	<i>P</i>	
4. Assess DEQ's Wetland Program Plan and update to coincide with the objectives of updated Strategic Framework.	<i>P</i>	

CURRENT ACTION ITEMS – TIMELINE EXTENDED		
WPD GRANT PERIOD	CY 2019	CY 2020
PUBLIC COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION		
1. Plan, hold, summarize, and lead the three state-wide Montana Wetland Council meetings per year.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
4. Develop and provide two training workshops per year for resource professionals	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
5. Provide technical assistance on wetland and riparian areas to federal, tribal, state and local resource professionals.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
7. Develop a science-based information and outreach campaign regarding Montana’s wetlands and riparian areas.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT		
5. Develop core indicators that are relevant to DEQ’s monitoring and assessment objectives.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
9. Design data management system that supports DEQ monitoring objectives.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
10. Analyze monitoring data to inform DEQ decision making and address DEQ monitoring objectives.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
WETLAND WATER QUALITY STANDARDS AND REGULATORY		
3. Provide technical expertise in the form of conducting wetland delineations to support enforcement of Montana water quality act programs and enforcement violations.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
VOLUNTARY RESTORATION AND PROTECTION		
2. Integrate wetland restoration into nonpoint source watershed restoration plans.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
3. Develop a voluntary restoration component within the Wetland Program at MDEQ.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
5. Develop resources for living with beaver and promote using beaver as a tool for restoring wetland and riparian areas.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
7. Identify and prioritize for restoration/protection rare, vulnerable, or important wetlands.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
9. Develop an active wetland and riparian restoration program on state-owned and state-managed lands.		<i>P</i>
10. Develop and provide wetland restoration, management and protection guidance to other CWA and WQA programs.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
11. Build collaborative partnerships to protect and restore wetlands.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
12. Identify and disseminate BMPs to protect and passively restore wetlands.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
POLICY AND PLANNING		
1. Integrate wetland and riparian area conservation, management, and restoration into watershed planning programs and processes.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
4. Research, develop, and distribute technical assistance resources to assist local government decision making to conserve and protect wetland and riparian resource.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>

CURRENT ACTION ITEMS – TIMELINE EXTENDED		
WPD GRANT PERIOD	CY 2019	CY 2020
VULNERABLE AND IMPACTED WETLAND		
2. Engage state and local governments in protecting vulnerable aquatic resources.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
3. Coordinate and organize the Wetland Council and others to develop Montana solutions to fill the federal gaps in protection for vulnerable aquatic resources.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
SUSTAINABLE FINANCING AND EFFECTIVENESS		
1. Identify and pursue additional opportunities for DEQ Wetland Program funding and institutionalize the Wetland Program as a component of DEQ water resource responsibilities.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>
5. Provide competitive small contracts to advance the goals and objectives of the Strategic Framework.	<i>P</i>	<i>P</i>