

Austin Smith
Gardiner High School

To citizens concerned about the quality and quantity of Montana's water supplies:

I represent Montana's citizens who seek to proactively ensure that natural water sources be both clean and available for domestic and agricultural use.

Drought is a common theme in Montana's recent history. Changing climatic conditions resulting from recent El Nino and La Nina events have altered the typical amount, timing, and distribution of precipitation in Montana. The relative scarcity in water can affect ground-water levels and streamflows even if the state receives an average amount of precipitation in subsequent years. This is of paramount concern to farmers and ranchers, whose livelihoods depend on the availability of irrigation water.

Quality, as well as quantity, of water is also of concern to farmers and ranchers. Recently, several TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load-the max amount of pollutants a given water body can handle without violating state water quality standards) law suits have been filed, showing a lack of consistency in the standards of Montana's water quality. Many stream segments in Montana are listed on the State's 303(d) list because of excessive concentrations of sediment, nutrients, and trace metals.

Given these statistics and the number of Montana citizens affected by availability and quality of water, it is obvious that efforts should be put forth to safeguard against the negative effects of drought and the dangers of polluted water. Clearly TMDL standards need to be revised and specified for different water bodies in different geographic locations. For instance, the standards must cater to a water body's proximity to people as well as animals, because animals are the source of revenue for many Montanans.

In addition, Montana's legislature needs to address the concerns of Montana's citizens who are particularly susceptible to the effects of drought. This will require an increase in measurements of streamflow at more locations statewide. As surface-water becomes scarce, accurate and timely streamflow measurements are critical to management of the resource. As drought sets in, Montana's ranchers and farmers should be aware of the severity of the problem and provided with information to regulate streamflow and water use so as not to run out. It should be the job of Montana's government or a regulatory agency under the government to carry out this task.

I will support legislation that reforms water quality standards and increases long-term water availability for domestic and agricultural use.

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