



MWWDA Position Statement on Montana's Groundwater

- ◆ A large segment of Montana's economy is dependent on agriculture, new home construction and domestic water wells. In Montana this economy requires ground water to survive. Montana has an abundance of ground water and the present day use is minuscule!! At present ground water use in Montana is less than 2% of surface use.
- ◆ The last legislature passed HB831 which has made it exceedingly difficult if not impossible to drill high production wells. This has effectively stopped any new agricultural use. New subdivisions must rely on domestic (exempt) wells.
- ◆ Now the antigrowth movement and DNRC are trying to stop the use of domestic wells based on questionable science that tries to say domestic wells will adversely affect senior water rights.
- ◆ Studies in other states have shown that domestic homes do not consume ground water. Actually, these studies have shown increased water levels in streams and shallow aquifers when the wells are completed in deeper aquifers!!
- ◆ In Montana 'The Nicklin Earth and Water Studies' have shown there is no cumulative impact on stream flow from the use of ground water! In fact, according to Tim Hall, Chief Council for DNRC, "Montana does not appear to have had much experience with the impact of a call by senior surface water right holders on junior ground water right holders." This is because it has not happened, it is not a problem.
- ◆ Recent legislation and DNRC rules do not allow ground water use even if there is no adverse effect to senior water users. The problem is the DNRC's method of determining adverse effect on senior water rights. Instead of looking at real, measurable adverse effects on water rights, the DNRC accepts ground water studies based on potential, theoretical computer models!! This method excludes such essential items as spring recharge to aquifers and a reasonable time period. The model may show theoretical effects hundreds of years in the future which will never actually take place!
- ◆ These drastic attacks will eliminate not only growth in housing and agriculture, but also such community essentials as wells for: rural schools, churches, cemeteries, feed yards, – and this list goes on into all of Montana's life and livelihoods.
- ◆ The only listed exception to this ground water attack is municipalities and they have tremendous problems with infrastructure, sewage treatment and effect on senior water rights. Effectively this antigrowth movement will stop all ground water use and kill Montana's economy!!
- ◆ The Legislature must do something or Montana will be going backward in development instead of forward with jobs and economic growth!
- ◆ The information and studies are located at mwwda.org - Groundwater section.

