



STATE OF MONTANA  
DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION  
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES DIVISION



Judy Martz  
Governor

July 19, 2004

Senator Walter McNutt, Chairman  
Environmental Quality Council  
PO Box 201704  
Helena, Montana 59620-1704

Dear Senator McNutt,

I have spoken to several individuals at DNRC and the Water Court in response to your May 20<sup>th</sup> letter to CIO Brian Wolf. DNRC is maintaining a list of problems, issues, and suggested enhancements for the water rights database application, and the NRIS web application. The list currently has 179 outstanding items. The biggest issue is that the Water Court cannot issue a decree. There are also issues related to data integrity, manual workarounds, incomplete data, report formatting, and unconverted data. Some of the problems may be due to incomplete training or operator error. The users' perspective is that the functionality doesn't meet the needs of the adjudication process and Water Court.

The Bureau Chief, Curt Martin, has taken steps to address the EQC concerns. He has contracted with Northrop Grumman and NRIS to start work on some of the outstanding problems. The contracts cover about 300 hours of work, but at this time there is no estimate of the effort and time necessary to complete all the critical changes. Curt is also in the process of adding a programmer to his staff. Unfortunately, it will take several months to search, hire, and train a programmer on the business processes related to water rights. I don't believe a new programmer will have much of an impact on the project in the time remaining.

My proposal for completing the research you requested has four parts. The first step is a meeting. Meetings are not exciting, but this meeting is key. The objective of the meeting would be to prioritize and categorize the 179 outstanding items. There is no consensus between the users, program staff, IT staff, and management on what items are essential requirements necessary to support business functions, which items could be future enhancements, and which items are non-essential preferences. The list needs to be prioritized and categorized before more time expires, otherwise DNRC staff and contractors may be working on non-critical problems. The decision on priority and category is primarily and end user and program management decision, not a technology decision. Meeting participants should be DNRC IT staff and management, DNRC Program management, knowledgeable end users, and DNRC management.

The second part of my proposed plan is an expert analysis of the requirements from the prioritization step. It is critical that we know the effort, time, and cost for implementing each essential function from the prioritization meeting. I firmly believe that Northrop Grumman would be the best firm to conduct this assessment since Northrop Grumman designed the database and application. After the analysis each requirement will have an associated time and cost.

**ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
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The third step is to construct a work schedule for the required work. DNRC management will have to develop a schedule that meets the user and program requirements. At this time any estimate of the cost to make the needed changes would be a wild guess. My personal guess is that the amount of work required by January will be far beyond the available internal DNRC resources. I base this on the fact that the current Northrop Grumman contract is only designed to address one of the outstanding issues.

The final step will be a contract with an external party, probably Northrop Grumman, to complete the required changes by January 1<sup>st</sup>. and Since the Water Rights Bureau's budget is small and relatively fixed, any significant funds for a contractor will have to come from division or department sources.

My proposed steps don't consider the Water Rights Bureau's financial limitations, and they assume that there is a significant amount of work hidden in the 179 items on the list. I think this is a conservative approach. I highly favor identifying the magnitude of the effort this summer, instead of limiting ourselves to current resources and finding out in November the task was far bigger than we ever imagined.

During my interviews at DNRC I noticed that the water rights database analyst and the new programmer will be working independently of the DNRC Information Technology Bureau. They report directly to the Water Rights Bureau. This arrangement makes backup support more difficult and handicaps the DNRC IT organization from applying all their IT resources to projects and problems. Other agencies, such as DEQ, have moved to a single centralized technology organization and have found it more effective. My recommendation would be for DNRC management to evaluate this reorganization.

Sincerely,

Kyle Hilmer  
Bureau Chief, Policy and Planning Services

cc. Jeff Brandt, Krista Evans, Curt Martin, Jim Gilman