

## Clark Fork River Basin Task Force

Created in 2001 pursuant to 85-2-350.

In 2004 the Task Force prepared the *Clark Fork Basin Watershed Management Plan*, most of which was subsequently adopted as a chapter in the State Water Plan. This *Watershed Management Plan* is available at:

[http://dnrc.mt.gov/wrd/water\\_mgmt/clarkforkbasin\\_taskforce/water\\_mgmt\\_plan.asp](http://dnrc.mt.gov/wrd/water_mgmt/clarkforkbasin_taskforce/water_mgmt_plan.asp).

Members of the Task Force are appointed by the DNRC Director. A list of the members is attached.

A key issue addressed in the *Watershed Management Plan* is the need for a source of water for future water needs and to increase the security of existing water rights. Water stored in Hungry Horse Reservoir, a large federal reservoir located on the South Fork of the Flathead River at the top of the basin, could supply future water uses and increase the security of water uses based on water rights junior to the lower basin hydropower rights. In 2005, at the request of the Task Force, the legislature passed House Joint Resolution 3 which urged the DNRC to enter into negotiations with the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBOR) to determine the availability and cost of water stored behind Hungry Horse Dam for which the State of Montana might contract to support future water development and existing water use in the Clark Fork River basin. In 2007, the Task Force sought and won approval of a \$260,000 appropriation by the legislature to DNRC to begin the process of contracting with the USBOR for water stored in Hungry Horse Reservoir. The Task Force also successfully sought a statutory change to the requirements for the state to lease water for beneficial purposes from large federal reservoirs. This change was necessary for the state to contract for Hungry Horse water and use it to meet water needs in the Clark Fork basin. The first step in the process for contracting for Hungry Horse water is underway.

In July of last year, the Task Force published *Managing Montana's Water: Challenges Facing the Prior Appropriation Doctrine in the 21st Century*. The purpose of this paper was to review the status of Montana's water allocation and management system and then to examine the challenges facing it. The paper found that "...increased competition for water resources and increased management complexity are creating challenges for implementation of the prior appropriation doctrine. The challenges result from reliance on individual water users for administration and enforcement that threatens the viability of water rights, groundwater development that impacts surface water, choices related to domestic water sources, and federal statutes and regulations that constrain the operation of federal water projects and river flow."

## Clark Fork River Basin Task Force

Name	Organization	Area/Interest Represented
Marc Spratt	Flathead Basin Commission	Flathead Basin above Flathead Lake
Nate Hall	Avista	Hydropower Utilities
Holly Franz	PPL Montana	Hydropower Utilities
Gail Patton	Sanders County Commissioner	Basin Local Governments
Arvid Hiller	Mountain Water Company	Municipal water companies and the Clark Fork River Watershed between the confluence of the Blackfoot River and the Clark Fork River and the confluence of the Clark Fork River and the Flathead River
Caryn Miske	Flathead Basin Commission	Flathead Lake
Ted Williams	Flathead Lakers	Flathead Lake
Steve Hughes	Joint Board of Control	Flathead River watershed below Flathead Lake to the confluence with the Clark Fork River
Jim Elliott		Lower Clark Fork watershed
Harvey Hackett	Bitter Root Water Forum	Bitterroot River watershed
Fred Lurie	Blackfoot Challenge	Blackfoot River watershed
Jim Dinsmore	Granite Conservation District & Upper Clark Fork River Basin Steering Committee	Upper Clark Fork River watershed
Brianna Randall	Clark Fork Coalition	Conservation/environmental organizations
Bill Gardner	Liberty Drilling	Montana Water Well Drillers Association
Verdell Jackson, <i>Ex Officio</i>	State Representative	Senate District 5