

A MONTANA WATER QUALITY PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

FOR

OIL AND GAS PRACTICES,

FOREST PRACTICES

AND

SUBDIVISIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The quality of Montana's water faces threats from many directions. With the growth of Montana's population and the increased demand on the state's available natural resources, diminished water quality is often an end result. Research and monitoring reveal that many activities previously not regarded as dangerous to water quality are in certain instances very real threats. Examples include abandoned and leaking underground gas storage tanks, improperly designed or sited mine tailings ponds, oil and gas reserve pits, subdivision development, inadequate central sewage treatment plants, and improper forest practices.

Source of the Problem

There are significant discrepancies in the capabilities of Montana's water quality program regarding these activities. These discrepancies are substantially because of the point or non-point character of the pollution source.

The specific location of point source water pollution allows relatively easy monitoring, and because of the concentrated source, pollution can often be isolated and remedied. Central sewage collection and treatment systems are the largest point source dischargers in the State. Industrial discharges follow, with certain mining operations and livestock feedlots rounding out the major point source dischargers.

Perhaps because of excesses attributed to more populated and industrial sections of the United States, the Federal Clean Water Act