

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION

Water Resources Division

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March 17, 2021

To: Cathy Duncan, LFD

From: Anna Pakenham Stevenson, Administrator
Water Resources Division, DNRC
Paul Azevedo, Bureau Chief
Water Management Bureau, DNRC

RE: American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and Stream Gages in Montana

This memo is in response to a question during the hearing/work session on HB 632, on Wednesday, March 17, 2021, as to whether ARPA funding could be used for stream gages in Montana.

The 2015 State Water Plan (Plan) highlighted the need for Montana to increase its capacity to collect more information on water supplies and demand. The Plan recommends Montana develop a network of 100 state-operated permanent, year-around stream gages on smaller streams and tributaries not monitored by the US Geological Survey (USGS) gage network. In response, the Water Resources Division (WRD) set a goal to upgrade, modernize, and expand the division's surface water data collection efforts by installing and operating 100 new "real-time" streamflow gages within the next ten years. WRD's Stream Gaging Program currently operates and maintains 30 real-time stream gages across Montana.

Information generated by WRD's gages assists the DNRC with administering the Montana Water Use Act, including new appropriations, change applications, decree enforcement, and implementation of federal water right compacts. Consumers of the hydrologic information generated by WRD include court appointed water commissioners, senior water right holders, and consultants. In addition, Conservation Districts and local watershed groups use WRD generated information to implement plans and agreements that address locally developed drought, fish habitat, water leasing, or water supply objectives.

If the committee wants to dedicate ARPA funding for Montana's Stream Gage Program, below is a list of current needs including the installation of 15 new gages (bringing the total 45 real-time WRD Stream Gages).

| | |
|--------------|------------------|
| Equipment | \$618,000 |
| Software | \$37,500 |
| Operations | \$110,000 |
| Total | \$765,500 |

Detailed Breakdown of WRD Stream Gage Program Needs

Equipment

| Quantity | Description | Cost/unit | Total Cost |
|----------|---|--------------|------------------|
| 15 | Real-Time Stream Gage [New] | \$15,000 | \$225,000 |
| 15 | Replacement Equipment | \$15,000 | \$225,000 |
| 4 | Flowtracker [streamflow measurement] | \$12,000 | \$48,000 |
| 2 | Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP) [streamflow measurement] | \$50,000 | \$100,000 |
| 2 | Bridge Crane | \$10,000 | \$20,000 |
| | | Total | \$618,000 |

Software

| Quantity | Description | Cost/unit | Total Cost |
|----------|------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Upgrade to Data Server | \$37,000.00 | \$37,000 |
| | | Total | \$37,000 |

Operations

| Quantity | Description | Cost/unit | Total Cost |
|----------|-------------------|--------------|------------------|
| 2 | Field vehicle | \$50,000 | \$100,000 |
| 1 | Equipment Trailer | \$10,000 | \$10,000 |
| | | Total | \$110,000 |