



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

Appendix D

Scoping Report

Final Environmental Assessment
Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project, Montana
Montana Area Office – Missouri Basin Region

Appendix D

Scoping Report

Final Environmental Assessment
Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project, Montana
Montana Area Office – Missouri Basin Region

prepared by:

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Montana Area Office**

April 2025

MTAO-EA-2024-003

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

DRWA	Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority
EA	Environmental Assessment
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Project	Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project
Reclamation	U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Reclamation

Appendix D – Scoping Report

Introduction

The Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority (DRWA) was formed by its constituent team members as a regional water authority in 2005 to provide water and sewer services across its service area in eastern Montana. DRWA has since constructed infrastructure projects primarily in areas south of Sidney, Montana. Individual or community groundwater wells with poor water quality currently serve the majority of the DWRA service area. DRWA is proposing a regional water system to provide high quality water to meet the current and future demands of rural towns and individual homes.

DRWA is seeking federal authorization and appropriation to construct the regional water system that will serve five counties in eastern Montana. DRWA previously worked with the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to complete a regional water system feasibility study under Reclamation’s now ended Rural Water Supply Program. Congress authorized and funded Reclamation to continue work on the feasibility study in Public Law 116-260, enacted December 27, 2020. Reclamation’s fiscal year 2022 Spend Plan allocated additional funding to complete the Dry-Redwater Rural Water Feasibility Study.

Pursuant to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements, Reclamation intends to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) to support its feasibility study. This document describes the public scoping activities conducted by Reclamation and DRWA for the Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project (Project).

This scoping report describes the Reclamation/DRWA noticing process, the public scoping meetings, and provides a summary of written and verbal comments received during the public scoping period. At the time of Project scoping, Reclamation served as lead agency for scoping. Since Project scoping was initiated, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has formally accepted the role as a cooperating agency and has designated Reclamation as lead federal agency.

Noticing

The 30-day public scoping comment period was November 14, 2023 to December 13, 2023. Public notices describing the upcoming scoping period and scoping meetings were published by DRWA in the following local newspapers:

- Garfield Gazette November 6, 2023
- Circle Banner November 8, 2023
- Northern Plains Independent November 9, 2023

Appendix D – Scoping Report

- Miles City Star November 9, 2023

Copies of these public notices are provided in Attachment A to this report. Additionally, public notices were submitted to the following local radio stations by DWRA:

- 95.5 FM KDZN – Glendive November 9, 2023
- 92.7 FM KVCK – Wolf Point November 9, 2023
- 660 AM KEYZ – Williston November 8, 2023
- 770 AM KATL – Miles City November 8, 2023

In addition to the above-described newspaper and radio public notices, public notices were posted on the Reclamation and DRWA websites. Federal, state, and local agencies, and tribal governments identified by Reclamation were notified of the scoping process via email by Reclamation. Communications with Tribes is described in a later section below.

Public Scoping Meetings

Public scoping meetings were held to solicit public comments on the scope of issues evaluated in the EA. The meetings were held at the following dates and locations:

- Meeting 1** November 14, 2023 – 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Bureau of Reclamation Regional Office, Room 207
2021 4th Avenue North
Billings, MT 59101
- Meeting 2** November 15, 2023 – 10:00 a.m. to noon
VFW Post
7886 Main Street
Jordan, MT 59337
- Meeting 3** November 15, 2023 – 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
McCone County Extension Building
Fairgrounds Road
Circle, MT 59215

The scoping meetings were held to provide information on the Project, accept comments on the scope of the EA, and gather input to assist with framing the analysis and focus of the EA.

Appendix D – Scoping Report

The meetings began with a presentation by Reclamation and consultant staff on the Project alternatives and schedule, the NEPA environmental review process, and the process for submitting scoping comments. Topics covered in the presentation included:

- Project team
- Project responsibilities and opportunities
- DRWA service area/Project area
- Project timeline
- Key considerations for Project development
- Service area groundwater quality
- NEPA process
- Alternatives to the proposed action (including No Action)
- Resource issues and concerns
- Guidance for effective public comments
- Land status, ownership, and management
- Key Project elements
- Proposed intakes
- Representative construction methods
- Representative infrastructure

Upon conclusion of the presentation, the meetings were opened for attendees to provide oral comments. Oral comments were noted by Reclamation and DRWA agency and consultant staff in attendance. The list of individuals that provided oral comments during the scoping meeting and a summary of each oral comment is provided in Table 1. A copy of the scoping presentation is available on Reclamation’s website at <https://www.usbr.gov/gp/mtao/dry-redwater/>.

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Cooperating Agencies

On November 7, 2023, Reclamation sent requests to seven federal agencies and ten non-federal agencies seeking their participation as Cooperating Agencies pursuant to 42 United States Code Section 4332 and 40 Code of Federal Regulations 1501.6. Cooperating Agencies are entities that have jurisdiction by law or special expertise regarding a particular project.

Reclamation sent cooperating agency request letters to the following agencies:

Federal Agencies

- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management
- US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service
- US Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Department of Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs
- US Geological Survey
- Western Area Power Administration

State and Local Agencies

- Montana Department of Environmental Quality
- Montana Department of Transportation
- Montana Historical Society
- Montana State Historic Preservation Office
- Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation
- McCone County
- Richland County
- Dawson County

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- Prairie County
- Garfield County

Three federal agencies and one state agency accepted the role as a cooperating agency; US Army Corps of Engineers, US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Western Area Power Administration and Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation.

Each of these agencies designated Reclamation as the lead federal agency for NEPA, Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). NRCS defined their role and responsibilities as a cooperating agency as follows:

The purpose of NRCS cooperation is to ensure that the project EA substantially satisfies NRCS requirements for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321–4347, and Guidance for Conducting Analyses Under the Principles, Requirements, and Guidelines (PR&G) for Water and Land Related Resources Implementation Studies and Federal Water Resource Investments DM 9500-013 (USDA NRCS, 2017). As a cooperating agency, NRCS anticipates our involvement will or may include:

- 1. Attending coordination meetings related to NRCS proposed actions.*
- 2. Writing a Finding of No Significant Impact as our decision-making document and Notice of Availability, if applicable.*
- 3. Supplementing the project EA with additional NRCS requirements related to coordination, consultations, and authorization, if not provided in the project EA.*

The state or local agencies contacted are not continuing as Cooperating Agencies but will continue their involvement as interested parties.

Native American Tribal Consultation

Tribal consultation is required by NEPA when a federally recognized tribe may be affected by a project. On November 7, 2023, Reclamation sent letters (Attachment B) to the following Native American tribes:

- Fort Belknap Indian Community
- Crow Tribe
- Three Affiliate Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation, North Dakota

Appendix D – Scoping Report

- Little Shell Chippewa Tribe
- Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa
- Turtle Mountain (Trenton Indian Service Area)

The letters invited the tribes to participate in the NEPA process and NHPA Section 106 consultation process for the Project and requested information under Section 106 of the NHPA regarding the identification of cultural resources in the Project area. Reclamation conducted additional efforts, including phone calls and emails, to confirm receipt of the letters. As of September 30, 2024, no tribes have requested consultation.

Summary of Scoping Comments

Reclamation and DRWA received seven comment submittals during the 30-day scoping period. Copies of the written comment submittals are in Attachment C. Table 1 summarizes the comments received during the public scoping process, in order of date of submittal.

Table 1. Scoping Comment Summary

Format	Date	Commenter	Summary of Comments	Response
Comment card	November 15, 2023	Alan Stemple, Individual	Support of the Project, with comments on anticipated lack of significant impacts, water quality and human health benefits, and reduction of aquifer depletion.	No response required.
Comment card	November 15, 2023	Mike Trotter, Individual	Support of the Project, with comments on water quality, human and livestock health, and economic benefits.	No response required.
Email	December 6, 2023	Emilee Burbidge, Individual	Support of the Project, with comments on water quality, health, environmental, and economic benefits.	No response required.
Email	December 6, 2023	Ken Ehli, Individual	Support of the Project, with comments on water quality, human health, environmental, and economic benefits.	No response required.

**Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project
FINAL Environmental Assessment**

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Format	Date	Commenter	Summary of Comments	Response
Email	December 6, 2023	Cassie Juliano, Individual	Support of the Project, with comments on water quality, human health, environmental, and economic benefits.	No response required.
Email	December 8, 2023	Richard Iverson, Individual	Support of the Project, with comments on water quality, human health, environmental, and economic benefits.	No response required.
Email	December 22, 2023	Diane Black, Individual	Support of the Project, with comments on human health, environmental, and economic benefits.	No response required.

Attachment A Public Notices

PUBLISHER'S AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

I, Jeana M. Bliss being duly sworn and say, I am the

Owner/Editor of Garfield Gazette

Published at Jordan, County of Garfield,
State of Montana; and that the advertisement, a printed copy of which is attached hereto, was printed and
Published in said newspaper on the following dates:

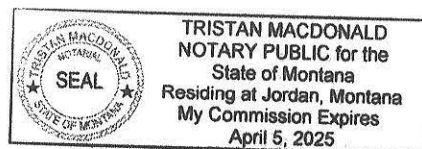
Dry Redwater Rural Water Project NEPA Meeting Schedule
November 6, 2023

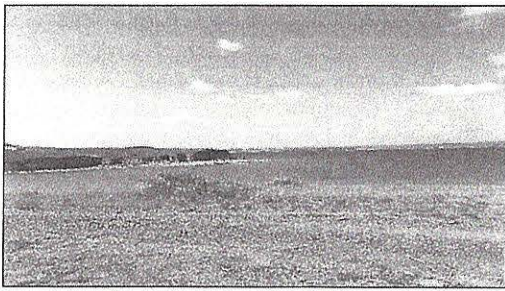
Jeana M Bliss
Signature

State of Montana
County of Garfield

Here by subscribed and sworn to before me on this 18th day of December, 2023.

Tristan MacDonald
Notary Public





DRY-REDWATER RURAL WATER PROJECT NEPA SCOPING MEETINGS SCHEDULED

Media Contact: Brittany Jones 406-247-7611
bjones@usbr.gov For Release: Nov. 6, 2023

Photo of Fort Peck Reservoir

BILLINGS, Mont. – The Bureau of Reclamation is scheduled to hold three public scoping meetings the week of Nov. 13 to discuss the Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project with the public and federal, state, and local agencies.

These meetings will serve as scoping meetings consistent with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and are intended to provide background, purpose and need for the project; inform attendees of the proposed action; describe how the public can participate in the NEPA process; and explain the project schedule.

Meetings will be held:

Nov. 14, 4-6 p.m.

Bureau of Reclamation Regional Office

2021 4th Avenue North, 2nd Floor Conference Room (Room 207), Billings Montana

*Note: Attendees must bring a government issued ID to gain access to the building, -

Federal law prohibits the possession of firearms or other dangerous weapons in Federal facilities by all persons not specifically authorized by 18 U.S.C 930. Violators will be subject to fine and/or imprisonment for periods up to five (5) years.

Nov. 15, 10 a.m.- noon

VFW Post 7886

Main Street, Jordan, Montana

Nov. 15, 4-6 p.m.

McCone County Extension Building

Fairgrounds Road, Circle, Montana

Reclamation has worked closely with the Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority since 2006 to address water supplies in northeastern Montana. The passage of the 2006 Rural Water Supply Act authorized Reclamation and DRWA to initiate a feasibility study intended to provide safe drinking water to communities within the DRWA service area. These initial planning and project design efforts continued through 2016. Passage of the Clean Water for Rural Communities Act of 2020 refocused Reclamation's and DRWA's efforts to move this project forward.

Reclamation anticipated completing the feasibility study in 2024. Concurrently, Reclamation would

prepare an environmental document consistent with its NEPA requirements with environmental and public involvement input to the decision-making process.

Media interested in attending meetings must RSVP to Brittany Jones at 406-247-7611 no later than Nov. 10, 2023 at bjones@usbr.gov or 406-247-7611.-

The picture was provided with the article.

COMMISSIONERS PROCEEDINGS REGULAR SESSION

September 11, 2023

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: CHAIRMAN: Kelly Witt; VICE- CHAIR: Jerry Collins; MEMBER: Carla McWilliams

MINUTES TAKEN BY: Jayci Saylor

CALL TO ORDER - ROLL CALL- Commissioner Witt called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

AGENDA- Motion by Collins, seconded by Witt to approve the agenda as posted 48 hours ago. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT - OLD BUSINESS- There was no public comment, or old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Dan and Pam Walters, Tom Wilson, Jodi McWilliams, Jennifer Crawford and Tasha Powell were present. Got gravel and would like to have the road crew take a blade down and help out. Things will have to be lined up for this to get done, and Bryan would be called to help them.

Possibly calling the Tribe to see what their plans are for the road. Discussion of cabin taxes. Jodi said an estimate was sent out but once the mills are set, they will know more.

Recessed for lunch at 12:00 p.m.

Reconvened by Chairman Witt at 1:00 p.m.

POOL BOARD- Present were Earline Lawrence, Bret Hellyer, Virgil Hellyer, Shawna Erlenbusch, Peg Pierson, Vicki Davidson. and Jennifer Crawford. Discussion on funds for the parks - pool. Kariotis park can be cleaned and paid for by the endowment. It has to be a High School student for this job. Collins asked if the Pool Board would switch over to the Town of Jordan? An agreement would have to be made for this to happen. Lawrence stated that she didnt think that was a good idea. All pool invoices will be sent to Earline and she will approve before the invoice is paid. Splash apd is paid for and will start this fall on the project.

Jerry left the meeting to go look at Road 17376 with Steve Mothershead.

CLAIMS- Claim Nos. 44415 through 44440 in the amount of \$72,519.58 were approved and paid.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m. The next regular meeting is scheduled for September 18, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

GARFIELD COUNTY COMMISSIONERS:

/s/ Kelly Witt, Chairman

/s/ Jerry Collins, Vice Chair

/s/ Carla McWilliams. Member

Attested by Seal:

/s/ Jayci Saylor Clerk and Recorder

COMMISSIONERS PROCEEDINGS REGULAR SESSION

September 18, 2023

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: CHAIRMAN: Kelly Witt; VICE- CHAIR: Jerry Collins; MEMBER: Carla McWilliams

MINUTES TAKEN BY: Jayci Saylor

CALL TO ORDER - ROLL CALL- Commissioner Witt called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

AGENDA—Motion by Collins, seconded by McWilliams to approve the agenda as posted 48 hours ago. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT - OLD BUSINESS- There was no public comment, or old business.

NEW BUSINESS- Randy Laskowski- DNRC, Ray Hageman, and Jennifer Crawford were present. Discussion on the truck payments. Lodgepole Fire is above him. Collins stated he called Randy and he wants to be done with the Co-Op Agreement. That is between the State and the County. Witt stated that everyone that is involved needs to be in a meeting together once a year. The Co-Op was last signed in 2012. Randy thinks that they County should get the full amount, instead of what DNRC tells us what we can spend it on. Witt will call Wyatt.

Earline Lawrence was in to discuss the Pool; Jennifer Crawford was present as well. The Pool has a negative cash balance. The Central Montana Fund account will need to be depleted and transfer the money to the County. The remaining negative balance will be covered by the pool funds endowment fund.

Collins made a motion to approve the budget, and to give me the authority to update the General Fund after a phone call. McWilliams seconded the motion. Motion carried. Resolution 10-2023 adopting the final operating budget and setting appropriation authority for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2024.

Recessed for lunch and adjourned to go look at Angel Hill Road at 11:45 a.m.

GARFIELD COUNTY COMMISSIONERS:

/s/ Kelly Witt, Chairman

/s/ Jerry Collins, Vice Chair

/s/ Carla McWilliams, Member

Attested by Seal:

/s/ Jayci Saylor, Clerk and Recorder

AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION
STATE OF MONTANA,
COUNTY OF Yellowstone

I, Crystal Nagel, Legal Specialist
being first duly sworn, depose and say that I am the principal clerk of the publisher newspaper(s) listed below in general circulation; that I know from my personal knowledge that the Legal

AD#: 445118

Sort Text: Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project NEP...

a printed copy of which is hereto annexed, was published in the entire issue of said newspaper for:

Miles City Star

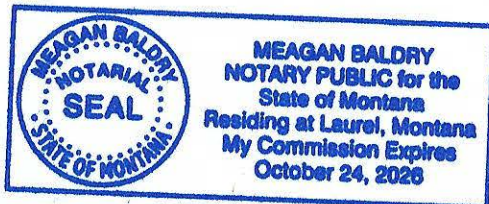
This Public Notice was printed and published in said newspaper(s) once each week, for 1 successive week(s); the first insertion being on 11/11/2023 and the last insertion being on 11/11/2023.

Total Cost: \$52.00

Subscribed and sworn by _____
before me on:

On 6th day of December, in the year of 2023

Meagan Baldry
Notary Public for the State of Montana Residing at;



Laurel
Montana

Dry-Redwater Rural Water
Project NEPA Scoping
Meetings scheduled

Media Contact: Brittany Jones
406-247-7611
bjones@usbr.gov
For Release: Nov. 6, 2023

BILLINGS, Mont. – The Bureau of Reclamation is scheduled to hold three public scoping meetings the week of Nov. 13 to discuss the Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project with the public and federal, state, and local agencies.

These meetings will serve as scoping meetings consistent with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and are intended to provide background, purpose and need for the project; inform attendees of the proposed action; describe how the public can participate in the NEPA process; and explain the project schedule.

Meetings will be held:

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Regional Office
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Floor Conference Room
(Room 207), Billings Montana

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Nov. 15, 10 a.m.- noon

VFW Post 7886
Main Street, Jordan, Montana

Nov. 15, 4-6 p.m.

McCone County Extension
Building Fairgrounds Road,
Circle, Montana

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(#445118 Published 11/08/23) MNAXLP

The Circle Banner
203 Fifth Ave Brockway
PO Box 308
Circle, MT 59215
(406) 485-3409 (office) - (406) 670-0854 (cell)
Email – banner@midrivers.com

AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION

Marcie Brost being duly sworn, deposes and says: That she is the principal owner of **The Circle Banner**, a newspaper of general circulation published weekly in **Circle, MT, County of McCone, State of Montana**, and the notice hereunto attached was printed and published in the said newspaper on

November 8th 2023, In the regular and entire issue of each paper printed.

I Sign

Marcie Brost

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN BEFORE ME

THIS 14 DAY OF Nov, 2023.

Jana Lee Hance



JANA LEE HANCE
NOTARY PUBLIC for the
State of Montana
Residing at Circle, Montana
My Commission Expires
September 25, 2025

NOTARY PUBLIC FOR THE STATE OF MONTANA

Classified Ads

ed
VE
13 or
m.
ckage

Help Wanted

**FARMERS UNION
C-STORE**

Hiring custodian, cooks,
and cashiers.
Pay depending on
availability/experience.
Please call 485-3333,
ask for Diane,
or stop by for an
application.

NP 9/9, TFN

Public Notice

meetings scheduled
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bjones@usbr.gov
For Release: Nov. 6, 2023
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2016. Passage of the Clean Water for
Rural Communities Act of 2020 refocused Reclamation's
and DRWA's efforts to move this
project forward.

Public N

**PUBLIC OPPORTUNITY TO PROTEST
ONE NEW Montana All-Alcoholic Beverage
with Catering Endorsement License
THE RANCH HOUSE BAR & GRILL**
Owner(s) has applied for one new Montana
All-Alcoholic Beverages with Catering
License No. 16-999-0002-002 to be operated at
**RANCH HOUSE BAR & GRILL, 210
Dawson County.** The public may protest this
license transfer in accordance with the Montana
Who can protest this transfer? Protest
from residents of the county of the proposed
location Dawson County, residents of
counties, and residents of adjoining counties or
another state if the criteria in 16-4-207,
Annotated (MCA), are met.
What information must be included? The letter must be
legible and contain (1) the protestor's
name, mailing address, and street address
number 16-999-0002-002 and the applicant's
name **THE RANCH HOUSE BAR & GRILL** and
indication that the letter is intended as a protest
description of the grounds for protest and the
protestor's signature. A letter with multiple
signatures will be considered one protest.
What are valid protest grounds? The grounds for
protest on the applicant's qualifications listed in
16-4-401, MCA, or the grounds for denial listed in
16-4-405, MCA. Examples of valid protest
grounds include: (1) the applicant is unable to
establishment in compliance with the Montana
the proposed location cannot be properly licensed by
authorities; and (3) the welfare of the community in
the vicinity of the proposed location will be
seriously affected.
How are protests submitted? Protests must be

de Scan Ads

\$250/year on your talk, text and
no hidden fees. Unlimited talk
data plans. Premium nationwide
based customer service. Limited
off on any new account. Use code
formation, call 1-877-324-0193
from Dish- 3 year TV Price
Reliability, backed by
Multi-Sport with NFL Redzone.
EE \$100 Gift Card. Call today!

ee? Get more! Free Towing. Tax
00 restaurant voucher and a 2-
y at one of 50 locations. Call

The Bureau of Reclamation is scheduled to hold three public scoping meetings the week of Nov. 13 to discuss the Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project with the public and federal, state, and local agencies in accordance with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.

- **Nov. 14, 4-6 p.m.**
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Fairgrounds Road, Circle, Montana

Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project NEPA Scoping Meetings scheduled

Media Contact: Brittany Jones 406-247-7611 bjones@usbr.gov
For Release: Nov. 6, 2023



Photo of Fort Peck Reservoir

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Attachment B Native American Tribal Consultation Database and Notices



BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Montana Area Office
P.O. Box 30137
Billings, MT 59107-0137



DRY-REDWATER REGIONAL
WATER AUTHORITY
P.O. Box 276
Circle, MT 59215

November 6, 2023

Chairman Frank White Clay
Crow Tribe of Montana
PO Box 159
Crow Agency, MT 59022

Subject: Invitation to Become a NEPA/MEPA Cooperating Agency on Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project Environmental Assessment.

Dear Chairman White Clay:

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is the lead federal agency for the development of an environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project. The project is sponsored by the Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority. We are requesting your Tribes participation as a cooperating/responsible agency in a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) process because the Crow Tribe has jurisdiction by law or special expertise related to potentially affected environmental or socioeconomic resources.

The proposed federal/state action would provide reliable and safe drinking water to rural residents of Garfield, McCone, Dawson, and Richland counties west of the Yellowstone River (Attachment 1). The residents in the proposed project area primarily obtain their domestic water from private wells drilled into shallow aquifers, gravel pockets, or deep confined aquifers. Some residents haul domestic water because well water is undrinkable or low well discharges make it unusable.

Your Tribes involvement should entail those areas under its jurisdiction and expertise. As a cooperating/responsible agency pursuant to NEPA or MEPA, the following activities will occur:

1. Your agency will be invited to coordination meetings.
2. We will provide your agency with an opportunity to comment on purpose and need and range of alternatives as early as practicable.
3. We will make available to your agency as early as practicable environmental and socioeconomic resources information located within the project area.
4. Your agency will identify any issues regarding the project's environmental and socioeconomic impacts that could substantially delay or prevent the granting of a permit or other approval.

5. We will consult with you on any relevant technical studies that will be required for the project.
6. Your agency may be asked to assist with the development of information and environmental analysis related to your areas of expertise.
7. We can include information in the project's environmental documents that assist your agency's need to satisfy NEPA and MEPA responsibilities, or any other requirements regarding jurisdictional permits and/or approvals.

We expect this EA will enable you to complete your jurisdictional responsibilities. At any point during the process, you have the obligation to tell us if your needs are not being met. We expect that at the end of the process the EA will satisfy your NEPA or MEPA requirements including those related to project alternatives, environmental consequences, and mitigation. Further we intend to utilize the EA and a subsequent finding of no significant impact as our decision-making document.

We look forward to your response to our request for your Tribe to be a cooperating/responsible agency and to working with you on this project. The favor of a reply is requested by December 6, 2023. If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the project or our agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EA, please contact Ryan Colloton, Project Manager, at (406) 247-7306 or rcolloton@usbr.gov. For specific environmental or NEPA questions, please contact Cody Hendrix, Natural Resource Specialist, at (406) 247-7351 or chendrix@usbr.gov. If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, please dial 7-1-1 to access telecommunications relay services.

Sincerely,



Ryan Newman
Area Manager
Montana Area Office
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation



Allen Rosaaen
Chairman
Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority



BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Montana Area Office
P.O. Box 30137
Billings, MT 59107-0137



DRY-REDWATER REGIONAL
WATER AUTHORITY
P.O. Box 276
Circle, MT 59215

November 6, 2023

President Jeffrey Stiffarm
Fort Belknap Indian Community of the Fort Belknap Reservation of Montana
158 Tribal Way
Harlem, MT 59526

Subject: Invitation to Become a NEPA/MEPA Cooperating Agency on Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project Environmental Assessment.

Dear President Stiffarm:

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is the lead federal agency for the development of an environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project. The project is sponsored by the Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority. We are requesting your Tribes participation as a cooperating/responsible agency in a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) process because the Fort Belknap Indian Community has jurisdiction by law or special expertise related to potentially affected environmental or socioeconomic resources.

The proposed federal/state action would provide reliable and safe drinking water to rural residents of Garfield, McCone, Dawson, and Richland counties west of the Yellowstone River (Attachment 1). The residents in the proposed project area primarily obtain their domestic water from private wells drilled into shallow aquifers, gravel pockets, or deep confined aquifers. Some residents haul domestic water because well water is undrinkable or low well discharges make it unusable.

Your Tribes involvement should entail those areas under its jurisdiction and expertise. As a cooperating/responsible agency pursuant to NEPA or MEPA, the following activities will occur:

1. Your agency will be invited to coordination meetings.
2. We will provide your agency with an opportunity to comment on purpose and need and range of alternatives as early as practicable.
3. We will make available to your agency as early as practicable environmental and socioeconomic resources information located within the project area.
4. Your agency will identify any issues regarding the project's environmental and socioeconomic impacts that could substantially delay or prevent the granting of a permit or other approval.

5. We will consult with you on any relevant technical studies that will be required for the project.
6. Your agency may be asked to assist with the development of information and environmental analysis related to your areas of expertise.
7. We can include information in the project's environmental documents that assist your agency's need to satisfy NEPA and MEPA responsibilities, or any other requirements regarding jurisdictional permits and/or approvals.

We expect this EA will enable you to complete your jurisdictional responsibilities. At any point during the process, you have the obligation to tell us if your needs are not being met. We expect that at the end of the process the EA will satisfy your NEPA or MEPA requirements including those related to project alternatives, environmental consequences, and mitigation. Further we intend to utilize the EA and a subsequent finding of no significant impact as our decision-making document.

We look forward to your response to our request for your Tribe to be a cooperating/responsible agency and to working with you on this project. The favor of a reply is requested by December 6, 2023. If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the project or our agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EA, please contact Ryan Colloton, Project Manager, at (406) 247-7306 or rcolloton@usbr.gov. For specific environmental or NEPA questions, please contact Cody Hendrix, Natural Resource Specialist, at (406) 247-7351 or chendrix@usbr.gov. If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, please dial 7-1-1 to access telecommunications relay services.

Sincerely,



Ryan Newman
Area Manager
Montana Area Office
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation



Allen Rosaaen
Chairman
Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority



BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Montana Area Office
P.O. Box 30137
Billings, MT 59107-0137



DRY-REDWATER REGIONAL
WATER AUTHORITY
P.O. Box 276
Circle, MT 59215

November 6, 2023

Chairman Floyd Azure
Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, Montana
PO Box 1027
Poplar, MT 59255

Subject: Invitation to Become a NEPA/MEPA Cooperating Agency on Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project Environmental Assessment.

Dear Chairman Azure:

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is the lead federal agency for the development of an environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project. The project is sponsored by the Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority. We are requesting your Tribes participation as a cooperating/responsible agency in a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) process because the Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation has jurisdiction by law or special expertise related to potentially affected environmental or socioeconomic resources.

The proposed federal/state action would provide reliable and safe drinking water to rural residents of Garfield, McCone, Dawson, and Richland counties west of the Yellowstone River (Attachment 1). The residents in the proposed project area primarily obtain their domestic water from private wells drilled into shallow aquifers, gravel pockets, or deep confined aquifers. Some residents haul domestic water because well water is undrinkable or low well discharges make it unusable.

Your Tribes involvement should entail those areas under its jurisdiction and expertise. As a cooperating/responsible agency pursuant to NEPA or MEPA, the following activities will occur:

1. Your agency will be invited to coordination meetings.
2. We will provide your agency with an opportunity to comment on purpose and need and range of alternatives as early as practicable.
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We look forward to your response to our request for your Tribe to be a cooperating/responsible agency and to working with you on this project. The favor of a reply is requested by December 6, 2023. If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the project or our agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EA, please contact Ryan Colloton, Project Manager, at (406) 247-7306 or rcolloton@usbr.gov. For specific environmental or NEPA questions, please contact Cody Hendrix, Natural Resource Specialist, at (406) 247-7351 or chendrix@usbr.gov. If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, please dial 7-1-1 to access telecommunications relay services.

Sincerely,



Ryan Newman
Area Manager
Montana Area Office
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation



Allen Rosaaen
Chairman
Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority



BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Montana Area Office
P.O. Box 30137
Billings, MT 59107-0137



DRY-REDWATER REGIONAL
WATER AUTHORITY
P.O. Box 276
Circle, MT 59215

November 6, 2023

Chairman Gerald Gray
Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Montana
615 Central Ave. W
Great Falls, MT 59404

Subject: Invitation to Become a NEPA/MEPA Cooperating Agency on Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project Environmental Assessment.

Dear Chairman Gray:

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is the lead federal agency for the development of an environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project. The project is sponsored by the Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority. We are requesting your Tribes participation as a cooperating/responsible agency in a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) process because the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians has jurisdiction by law or special expertise related to potentially affected environmental or socioeconomic resources.

The proposed federal/state action would provide reliable and safe drinking water to rural residents of Garfield, McCone, Dawson, and Richland counties west of the Yellowstone River (Attachment 1). The residents in the proposed project area primarily obtain their domestic water from private wells drilled into shallow aquifers, gravel pockets, or deep confined aquifers. Some residents haul domestic water because well water is undrinkable or low well discharges make it unusable.

Your Tribes involvement should entail those areas under its jurisdiction and expertise. As a cooperating/responsible agency pursuant to NEPA or MEPA, the following activities will occur:

1. Your agency will be invited to coordination meetings.
2. We will provide your agency with an opportunity to comment on purpose and need and range of alternatives as early as practicable.
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We look forward to your response to our request for your Tribe to be a cooperating/responsible agency and to working with you on this project. The favor of a reply is requested by December 6, 2023. If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the project or our agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EA, please contact Ryan Colloton, Project Manager, at (406) 247-7306 or rcolloton@usbr.gov. For specific environmental or NEPA questions, please contact Cody Hendrix, Natural Resource Specialist, at (406) 247-7351 or chendrix@usbr.gov. If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, please dial 7-1-1 to access telecommunications relay services.

Sincerely,



Ryan Newman
Area Manager
Montana Area Office
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation



Allen Rosaaen
Chairman
Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority



BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Montana Area Office
P.O. Box 30137
Billings, MT 59107-0137



DRY-REDWATER REGIONAL
WATER AUTHORITY
P.O. Box 276
Circle, MT 59215

November 6, 2023

Chairman Mark Fox
Three Affiliate Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation, North Dakota
404 Frontage Rd.
New Town, ND 58763

Subject: Invitation to Become a NEPA/MEPA Cooperating Agency on Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project Environmental Assessment.

Dear Chairman Fox:

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is the lead federal agency for the development of an environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project. The project is sponsored by the Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority. We are requesting your Tribes participation as a cooperating/responsible agency in a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) process because the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arkiara Nation has jurisdiction by law or special expertise related to potentially affected environmental or socioeconomic resources.

The proposed federal/state action would provide reliable and safe drinking water to rural residents of Garfield, McCone, Dawson, and Richland counties west of the Yellowstone River (Attachment 1). The residents in the proposed project area primarily obtain their domestic water from private wells drilled into shallow aquifers, gravel pockets, or deep confined aquifers. Some residents haul domestic water because well water is undrinkable or low well discharges make it unusable.

Your Tribes involvement should entail those areas under its jurisdiction and expertise. As a cooperating/responsible agency pursuant to NEPA or MEPA, the following activities will occur:

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We look forward to your response to our request for your Tribe to be a cooperating/responsible agency and to working with you on this project. The favor of a reply is requested by December 6, 2023. If you have any questions or would like to discuss in more detail the project or our agencies' respective roles and responsibilities during the preparation of this EA, please contact Ryan Colloton, Project Manager, at (406) 247-7306 or rcolloton@usbr.gov. For specific environmental or NEPA questions, please contact Cody Hendrix, Natural Resource Specialist, at (406) 247-7351 or chendrix@usbr.gov. If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, please dial 7-1-1 to access telecommunications relay services.

Sincerely,



Ryan Newman
Area Manager
Montana Area Office
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation



Allen Rosaaen
Chairman
Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority



BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Montana Area Office
P.O. Box 30137
Billings, MT 59107-0137



DRY-REDWATER REGIONAL
WATER AUTHORITY
P.O. Box 276
Circle, MT 59215

November 6, 2023

Chairman Jamie Azure
Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians
4180 Hwy 281
Belcourt, ND 58316

Subject: Invitation to Become a NEPA/MEPA Cooperating Agency on Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project Environmental Assessment.

Dear Chairman Azure:

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is the lead federal agency for the development of an environmental assessment (EA) for the proposed Dry-Redwater Rural Water Project. The project is sponsored by the Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority. We are requesting your Tribes participation as a cooperating/responsible agency in a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) process because the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians has jurisdiction by law or special expertise related to potentially affected environmental or socioeconomic resources.

The proposed federal/state action would provide reliable and safe drinking water to rural residents of Garfield, McCone, Dawson, and Richland counties west of the Yellowstone River (Attachment 1). The residents in the proposed project area primarily obtain their domestic water from private wells drilled into shallow aquifers, gravel pockets, or deep confined aquifers. Some residents haul domestic water because well water is undrinkable or low well discharges make it unusable.

Your Tribes involvement should entail those areas under its jurisdiction and expertise. As a cooperating/responsible agency pursuant to NEPA or MEPA, the following activities will occur:

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Sincerely,



Ryan Newman
Area Manager
Montana Area Office
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation



Allen Rosaaen
Chairman
Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority

Tribal Contacts and Responses

Last Name	First Name	Agency	Position	Mailing Address	City	State	Zip Code	Date Letter Sent	Response
Azure	Floyd	Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes of Fort Peck Indian Reservation	Tribal Chair	P.O. Box 1027	Poplar	MT	59255	6-Nov-2023	None to date
Stiffarm	Jeffrey	Fort Belknap Indian Community	Tribal President	656 Agency Main Street	Harlem	MT	59526	6-Nov-2023	None to date
White Clay	Frank	Crow Tribe	Tribal Chair	P.O. Box 159	Crow Agency	MT	59022	6-Nov-2023	None to date
Fox	Mark	Three Affiliate Tribes of the Fort Berthold Reservation, North Dakota	Tribal Chair	404 Frontage Road	New Town	ND	58763	6-Nov-2023	None to date
Gray	Gerald	Little Shell Chippewa Tribe	Tribal Chair	625 Central Avenue West	Great Falls	MT	59401	6-Nov-2023	None to date
Azure	Jamie	Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa	Tribal Chair	4180 Highway 281	Belcourt	ND	58316	6-Nov-2023	None to date

Attachment C Written Comments

[EXTERNAL WRA Support Comment

Diane black dblack200@gmail.com>

Tue 12/12/2023 12:46 PM

To:Hendrix, Cody B CHendrix@usbr.gov>

This email has been received from outside of DOI - Use caution before clicking on links, opening attachments, or responding.

To Whom It May Concern:

I support the Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority's crucial work to bring clean, accessible drinking water to the area. Please take my support into consideration while going through the NEPA and Feasibility process. The Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority (DRWA) is supported and considered vital by the people, families, and businesses in our area. I recognize the health and economic benefits to be accomplished with this project.

Regional water is a long-term solution to good quality water and the economic impact would be of great benefit to Eastern Montana. I support DRWA and the positive improvement it will bring with regard to conservation and environmental impacts. Thank you for your efforts.

Sincerely,

Diane Black

PO Box 236

Circle, MT 59215 <

[EXTERNAL] ort for DRWA NEPA rocess

Emilee Bur idge <emserene1@gmail.com>

Wed 12/6/2023 2:25 PM

To:Hendrix, Cody B <CHendrix@us r.gov>

**This email has been received from outside of DOI - Use caution before clicking on links, b
opening attachments, or responding.**

To Whom It May Concern:

I support Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority's crucial work to ring clean, accessi le drinking b water to the area. Please take my support into consideration while going through the NEPA and Feasi ility process. The Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority (DRWA) is supported and considered vital y the people, families, and usiness in our area. I recognize the health and economic enefits to e accomplished with this project.

Regional water is a long-term solution to good quality water and the economic impact would e of great enefit to Eastern Montana. I support DRWA and the positive improvement it will ring with regard to conservation and environmental impacts. Thank you for your efforts.

Sincerely,

Emilee Bur idge b

[EXTERNAL WRA

en and Susy <kde@midrivers.com

Wed 12/6/2023 4:35 PM

To:Hendrix, Cody B <CHendrix@usbr.gov

This email has been received from outside of DOI - Use caution before clicking on links, opening > attachments, or responding.

To Whom It May Concern:

I support Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority's crucial work to bring clean, accessible drinking water to the area. Please take my support into consideration while going through the NEPA and Feasibility process. The Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority (DRWA) is supported and considered vital by the people, families, and business in our area. I recognize the health and economic benefits to be accomplished with this project. Regional water is a long-term solution to good quality water and the economic impact would be of great benefit to Eastern Montana. I support DRWA and the positive improvement it will bring with regard to conservation and environmental impacts. Thank you for your efforts.
Sincerely,

en Ehli >

[EXTERNAL] support of DR NEPA and Feasibility Study

ji@midrivers.com <ji@midrivers.com>

Fri 12/8/2023 7:07 PM

To: Hendrix, Cody B <CHendrix@usbr.gov>

This email has been received from outside of DOI - Use caution before clicking on links, opening attachments, or responding.

From: rji@midrivers.com <rji@midrivers.com>
Sent: Friday, December 8, 2023 7:06 PM
To: 'mailto:chendrix@usbr.gov' <mailto:chendrix@usbr.gov>
Subject: FW: support of DRWA NEPA and Feasibility Study

From: rji@midrivers.com <rji@midrivers.com>
Sent: Friday, December 8, 2023 7:04 PM
To: 'mailto:chendrix@usbr.gov' <<mailto:chendrix@usbr.gov>>
Cc: 'drwa2@midrivers.com' <drwa2@midrivers.com>
Subject: support of DRWA NEPA and Feasibility Study

Cody Hendrix

I support Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority's crucial work to bring clean, accessible drinking water to the area. Please take my support into consideration while going through the NEPA and Feasibility process. The Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority (DRWA) is supported and considered vital by the people, families, and business in our area. I recognize the health and economic benefits to be accomplished with this project. Regional water is a long-term solution to good quality water and the economic impact would be of great benefit to Eastern Montana. I support DRWA and the positive improvement it will bring with regard to conservation and environmental impacts. Thank you for your efforts.

Sincerely,

Richard Iversen
Rancher and resident in DRWA future service area, also future user of DRWA

13749 CR 332
Culbertson, Mt.
59218

[EXTERNAL Redwate

Cassie Juliano <cassiejuliano 5@gmail.com>

Wed 2/6/2023 2:09 PM

To:Hendrix, Cody B <CHendrix@usbr.gov>

**This email has been received from outside of DOI - Use caution before clicking on links, 1
opening attachments, or responding.**

To Whom It May Concern:

I support Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority's crucial work to bring clean, accessible drinking water to the area. Please take my support into consideration while going through the NEPA and Feasibility process. The Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority (DRWA) is supported and considered vital by the people, families, and business in our area. I recognize the health and economic benefits to be accomplished with this project.

Regional water is a long-term solution to good quality water and the economic impact would be of great benefit to Eastern Montana. I support DRWA and the positive improvement it will bring with regard to conservation and environmental impacts.

Thanks.

- Cassie Juliano 1

DRY-REDWATER RURAL WATER PROJECT
SCOPING COMMENT CARD



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

Meeting Date: ☐ Nov 14, 2023 (Billings, Mt)
(Please Check One) ☐ Nov 15, 2023 (Jordan, Mt)
☐ Nov 15, 2023 (Circle, Mt)

Please check your affiliation below:

- ☒ Individual (no affiliation)
☐ Private Organization
☐ Federal, State, or Local Government
☐ Citizen's Group
☐ Elected Representative
☐ Regulatory Agency

Name: Alan Stempel

Organization (if applicable): _____

Street Address (optional): 208 Beauty Creek Road

City/State/Zip (optional): Brookway MT 59014

Email (optional): stempelalan@gmail.com

☒ I would like to be added to the mailing list.

If you wish to provide written comments, please write your comments below (use back of sheet if needed). Written comments may be submitted using this card, via e-mail, or any other written format sent to the address below within the scoping period, December 13, 2023.

Comments: Our land has multiple water
lines. This project will be well
received and there will be no long
term negative impacts. After
construction the land (continued on back)

Please submit today or via U.S. mail to: Cody Hendrix, Bureau of
Reclamation, 2900 4th Avenue N. Suite 50, Billings, MT 59101

E-mail: chendrix@usbr.gov

For more information and maps please visit:

<https://www.usbr.gov/gp/mtao/dry-redwater/>

Comments continued:

will recover quickly. This area
has never been heavily populated
so it is unlikely that any line
will cross any historically
significant sites. This project
will provide clean potable water
to numerous homes and agricultural
sites which will improve the
health of people and animals
we can not drink the water
at our house due to water
quality so this project will
benefit the environment as we
reduce the amount of water
drawn from the aquifer and
provide drinking and bathing
water which helps our health

**DRY-REDWATER RURAL WATER PROJECT
SCOPING COMMENT CARD**



Meeting Date: ☐ Nov 14, 2023 (Billings, Mt)
(Please Check One) ☐ Nov 15, 2023 (Jordan, Mt)
☒ Nov 15, 2023 (Circle, Mt)

— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

Please check your affiliation below:

- ☒ Individual (no affiliation)
☐ Private Organization
☐ Federal, State, or Local Government
☐ Citizen's Group
☐ Elected Representative
☐ Regulatory Agency

Name: MIKE TROTTER

Organization (if applicable): DRWA, PROPOSED WATER USER

Street Address (optional): 210 COUNTY ROAD 620

City/State/Zip (optional): RICHEY, MT 59259

Email (optional): MIKET@MIDRIVER.COM

☒ I would like to be added to the mailing list.

If you wish to provide written comments, please write your comments below (use back of sheet if needed). Written comments may be submitted using this card, via e-mail, or any other written format sent to the address below within the scoping period, December 13, 2023.

Comments: MYSELF AND MY EXTENDED
FAMILY IN THE DRWA PROPOSED
SERVICE ARE WOULD GREATLY BENEFIT
FROM THIS PROJECT. IT WOULD
ECONOMICALLY BENEFIT AS (continued on back)

Please submit today or via U.S. mail to: Cody Hendrix, Bureau of Reclamation, 2900 4th Avenue N. Suite 50, Billings, MT 59101

E-mail: chendrix@usbr.gov

For more information and maps please visit:

<https://www.usbr.gov/gp/mtao/dry-redwater/>

Comments continued:

THE COST OF WELLS AND TREATMENT
OF SAID WATER TO MAKE IT
POTABLE WATER SUITABLE FOR
HUMAN AND LIVESTOCK IS ~~COSED~~
EXPENSIVE. THE AVAILABILITY OF
GOOD WATER WOULD BENEFIT
THE SERVICE AREA AS MANY
LOCATIONS IN OUR ~~SD~~ DRWA
SERVICE AREA DO NOT HAVE
~~WATER~~ USABLE WATER. OUR
COMMUNITIES WOULD THRIVE
WITH GOOD, RELIABLE WATER.
THIS PROJECT ALSO HAS HEALTH
BENEFITS AS MUCH OF THE
GROUND WATER IN THIS AREA
IS UNHEALTHY.