

**MDEQ Semi-Annual Progress Report  
EPA Wetland Development Grant Program  
CD 998117-14 Federal Fiscal Year 2006**

**Report Date – June 30, 2008**

**Prepared by Lynda Saul, Wetland Program Coordinator MDEQ**

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality received a Wetland Protection Development Grant from EPA for \$347,494 as stated in the Wetland Protection Assistance Agreement awarded September 27, 2006. A non-federal match of \$116,632 will be met for this grant. This grant provides funding for six Montana wetland program development activities and grants administration. Two projects have been completed and final reports are submitted along with this status report. This grant expires September 30, 2009.

**1) Implementation of Wetland Protection in Ravalli County – Bitterroot Water Forum.**

Summary of Activities

This project included four major tasks. 1) Developing a decision tree where wetland related data and actions can be inserted in the subdivision review process at the local government level. 2) Providing wetland training to the Ravalli County planning and environment health staff. 3) Providing technical assistance on watercourse setback to the local government (including a driving tour and river tour of the resources). 4) Sharing information via a case study and final report.

Accomplishments/Problems

All of the project tasks have been successfully accomplished with the exception of the driving tour and river tour. These components were deemed no longer a priority and the funds set aside for these tasks (\$3,080 total) will be used for other DEQ Wetland Program projects and reported in the final closeout grant report.

Schedule

This project was scheduled to be completed 7/15/08 and has been completed on time. A final project report has been submitted and is attached along with a report titled Ravalli County Montana Streamside Setback Initiative: A Case Study.

**2) Critical Lands Project – Flathead Lakers.**

Summary of Activities

This project included four major tasks. 1) Strengthen collaboration and coordination for critical lands conservation. 2) Design Fops Bend Conservation Project. 3) Protect Owen Sowerwine Natural Area. 4) Develop a long-term Critical Lands Conservation Plan.

Accomplishments/Problems

The main accomplishment of this project has been the protection of 1,353 acres of wetlands, riparian areas and prime agricultural lands and restoration of more than 4,000 linear feet of wetland and riparian buffers project along the Flathead River corridor.

Schedule

This project was scheduled to be completed 6/30/08 and has been completed on time. A final project report has been submitted and is attached along with a report titled “Critical Lands Conservation Funding Opportunities Flathead River Corridor Projects.”

### **3) Wetland Stewardship Education for Montana – Montana Watercourse.**

#### Summary of Activities

This project included four major tasks. 1) Revising and updating the Landowners Guide to Montana Wetlands. 2) Conducting five Realtor workshops. 3) Distributing updated ponds information. 4) Conducting four WET/WOW workshops for educators.

#### Accomplishments/Problems

Revising the Landowners Guide became a much larger task than originally envisioned, including creating two guides one to address state-wide issues and another specifically aimed at eastern Montana landowners. Several other organizations have contributed expertise and funds to accomplish this larger project. The Realtor Workshops reached 221 participants including a ½ day course and detailed information packet. MT Watercourse has distributed almost 1,400 ponds booklets; recipients include Montana Nursery and Landscape Association, County Extension Agents, Resource and Conservation Development Offices, Montana Association of Conservation Districts and private citizens. Four WET/WOW workshops have been held across the state.

#### Schedule

This project is scheduled to be completed 9/30/08 and will be completed on time. A final project report is due 11/15/08 will be submitted as part of the final closeout grant report.

### **4) Mapping and Analysis of Geographically Isolated Wetlands – MT Natural Heritage Program**

#### Summary of Activities

This project includes seven major tasks. 1) Create a model for identifying and analyzing isolated wetlands within the limits of current National Wetland Inventory (NWI) mapping. 2) Create a model for identifying and mapping ephemeral and intermittent streams. 3) Devise a probabilistic sampling method. 4) Develop sufficient digital wetland map layers for each ecological section (or subsection). 5) Evaluate the potential for loss of wetland types, functions, or species. 6) Enter high-quality reference wetlands into databases. 7) Promote the model and maps to wetland planners and managers at all level of government.

#### Accomplishments/Problems

Task 1 has been essentially completed. A preliminary report has been reviewed by DEQ and is undergoing final revisions by the contractor. Task 3 has been completed. All other tasks are ongoing.

#### Schedule

This project is scheduled to be completed 12/31/08 and will be completed on time. A final project report is due 2/15/09 will be submitted as part of the final closeout grant report.

### **5) Development of a GIS Level 1 Assessment Tool – MT Natural Heritage Program**

#### Summary of Activities

This project includes five major tasks. 1) Identify landscape-level assessment metrics to produce preliminary assessment of site-level wetland condition. 2) Develop a probabilistic sampling strategy for model refinement. 3) Computer-test the model. 4) Field-test and refine the model. 5) Develop a Level 1 GIS tool that can be used by ArcMap users to evaluate wetlands.

#### Accomplishments/Problems

Task 1 and 4 are partially complete and are ongoing. Preliminary analysis revealed that results may have been skewed by the purposes of the underlying surveys (amphibian absence and

presence). Therefore, additional statewide field surveys were added to expand the data set and stratified by ecoregion to complete these tasks.

#### Schedule

This project is scheduled to be completed 12/31/08 and will be completed on time. A final project report is due 2/15/09 will be submitted as part of the final closeout grant report.

### **6) Planning for Wetlands – Montana Audubon**

#### Summary of Activities

This project includes five major tasks; 1) Presentations to local governments and professional societies; 2) Presentations to citizen groups; 3) Technical assistance to local governments and citizen groups; 4) Create and maintain a catalogues of the land use planning regulations adopted by local governments in Montana that protect wetlands and riparian areas, report on implementation of local regulations, and update the “Planning Guide”; and 5) Website development with information about protecting wetland and riparian areas in land use planning decisions.

#### Accomplishments/Problems

Task 1 and 2 are partially complete with presentations made to Ravalli, Flathead, Missoula, and Madison County. Task 3 has seen significant progress with interim zoning regulation assistance: developed a memorandum on impacts that stream setbacks have on public health and safety, and served as a resource on proposed setback regulation for Ravalli County; headline a public forum and assist with setback language for Madison County; develop a flood photo gallery, speak at a setback hearing, and produce a memorandum on stream permitting programs versus stream setbacks for Flathead County; and other assistance. This task is proving to be very useful and in high demand by local governments and citizen groups. We are currently revising the contract to put more emphasis and additional deliverables in Task 3 and reduce the scope of Task 1 and 2. Tasks 4 and 5 are ongoing.

#### Schedule

This project is scheduled to be completed 6/30/09 and will be completed on time. A final project report is due 7/15/09 will be submitted as part of the final closeout grant report.

### **Wetlands Grant Administration– Montana Department of Environmental Quality**

#### Summary of Activities

This project included approximately 10% of the Region 8 grant award to Montana DEQ to administer the EPA Wetlands Development Grants program for all Montana non-tribal awards.

#### Accomplishments/Problems

The DEQ Wetland Coordinator has been actively engaged and involved in the content of each project.

#### Schedule

This project is ongoing. Semi-annual project reports will continue to be submitted at 6 month intervals. Future semi-annual reports will cover July 1 to December 31, 2008 and January 1 to September 30, 2009. Final project reports will be submitted during the period in which each project is completed.