

St. Mary & Milk River Water Management Initiative
Joint Status Report #7
July 23, 2009

Status

Members of the Montana and Alberta Joint Initiative Team (JIT) toured the Alberta portion of the Milk River to view the potential Milk River Dam location, channel erosion on the Milk River and two direct pumping irrigation operations and the continuous water metering at these operations.

At the meeting, the Technical Team leads presented the final calibration results of the water management model to the JIT. The Technical Teams feels the model mimics, as closely as possible, actual operations of the system during the 1959-2003 periods and recommended to the JIT that the model was ready to simulate the future water management options. The JIT agreed with the Technical Teams recommendation and instructed them to proceed with the simulation of the future water management options.

Background

The St. Mary & Milk River Water Management Initiative is being conducted under a Terms of Reference approved by Premier Stelmach and Governor Schweitzer in January 2009. Under the Terms of Reference, Montana and Alberta agree that the shared water of the St. Mary and Milk Rivers is an important resource to both jurisdictions and that there are opportunities for the two jurisdictions to work together to improve their timing and access to this shared water. Alberta and Montana have shared the water from the two rivers for 100 years, under Article VI of the Boundary Waters Treaty (1909).

The Terms of Reference establishes a twelve member Joint Initiative Team of local water users and government officials from both sides of the border. The Team has been asked to explore and evaluate options for improving both Montana's and Alberta's access to the shared waters of the St. Mary and Milk Rivers, and make joint recommendations on preferred options to both governments for their consideration and approval. A report containing the joint recommendations is due to both governments in the fall of 2010.

The Joint Initiative Team is co-chaired by Robert Harrison from Alberta Environment, and John Tubbs from the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation. Other team members include representatives from the Milk River Watershed Council Canada, Oldman Watershed Council, Alberta Agriculture & Rural Development, the office of Montana's Lt. Governor, Blackfeet Tribe, Ft. Belknap Indian Community, and the Milk River watershed in Montana.