



**MONTANA
RURAL WATER
SYSTEMS, INC.**

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May 11, 2026

The Honorable Steve Daines
United States Senate

The Honorable Tim Sheehy
United States Senate

The Honorable Troy Downing
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
United States House of Representatives

Re: Support for Federal Authorization of the Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority Rural Water Project

Dear Senator Daines, Senator Sheehy, Representative Downing, and Representative Zinke:

I am writing in strong support of federal authorization for the Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority Rural Water Project.

As Executive Director of Montana Rural Water Systems, I work with water and wastewater systems across Montana. I have been out to small systems, visited with operators, looked at the infrastructure, and seen firsthand what many rural communities are up against. In a lot of places, the problem is not that people are unwilling to do the work or that local operators are not doing their jobs. The problem is the source water. Some communities are starting with water that is high in minerals, hard to treat, hard on equipment, expensive to manage, and still not the quality that families, schools, farms, ranches, and businesses should have to rely on.

That is especially true in eastern Montana. Many residents in this part of the state deal with poor groundwater, limited well production, high treatment costs, scaling, corrosion, taste and odor problems, and the constant challenge of keeping small systems affordable for a small number of users. Some families have to haul water because what they have available at home is not dependable or drinkable. That should not be normal in Montana.

The Dry-Redwater project is important because it addresses the problem the right way. Instead of expecting every small town, rural water district, subdivision, farm, ranch, or household to solve the same water-quality problem on its own, this project creates a regional solution. That matters. In rural Montana, distances are long, the rate base is small, and the cost of treatment, pipelines, pumps, tanks, power, testing, maintenance, and certified operation does not get cheaper just because fewer people live there. Without a regional approach and a federal partner, these communities simply cannot carry the full burden by themselves.

This project would help communities and rural areas that have needed better water for a long time, including places such as Circle, Richey, Jordan, Lambert, Savage, Bloomfield, Brockway, Brusett, Cohagen, Lindsay, Vida, and the surrounding farms, ranches, and water districts. These are not just dots on a map. These are working Montana communities. They support agriculture, schools, local businesses, county tax bases, and families who want to stay where they are from.

Clean and reliable water is not a luxury. It is the foundation everything else is built on. A town cannot grow without it. A school cannot operate without it. A ranch cannot function without it. A business cannot expand without it. And operators cannot treat their way out of every source-water problem when the raw water is poor and the system does not have the money or infrastructure to fix the bigger issue.

From what I have seen in Montana, projects like this are exactly why federal rural water authorization matters. Rural communities are willing to do their part, but they need a realistic path forward. The Dry-Redwater project gives them that path. It is a long-term investment in public health, agriculture, economic stability, and the future of eastern Montana.

I appreciate Senator Daines' leadership in moving this authorization bill forward, and I appreciate the support of Senator Sheehy, Representative Downing, and Representative Zinke. I respectfully urge the Montana delegation to continue working together to authorize this project, support it through hearings and committee work, and help secure the federal partnership needed to move it toward construction.

As someone who understands the challenges facing Montana water systems on the ground, I strongly believe this project is needed. It is practical, it is regional, and it addresses a real water problem that local communities have lived with for too long.

Please support federal authorization of the Dry-Redwater Regional Water Authority Rural Water Project.

Sincerely,

Ben Rigby
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