



PARK CONSERVATION DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

Local, commonsense conservation - working together for Park County.

WINTER IN PARK COUNTY

>>> WELCOME MELISSA NICOLLI: NEW DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

Melissa Nicolli is from the Midwest originally but began calling Livingston home 4 years ago. She comes to the Park CD from the Forest Service where she worked as a Biologist and Permitting Specialist.

Outside of work she enjoys hiking, skiing, and appreciating Park County's natural wonders. She is excited to embark into this new role and is committed to supporting producers through collaborative natural resource planning efforts and outreach.

>>> 310 PERMITS - IT'S FREE, IT'S THE LAW!

Any activity that physically alters or modifies the bed or banks of a perennially flowing stream needs a 310 permit from the Park Conservation District before proceeding. This permit is required under the Montana Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act (310 Law). Permits are free of charge. Work done without a 310 permit is subject to fines in addition to the costs of any required remediation.

310 applications are due to the Conservation District on the 15th of each month. They can be submitted electronically to kelly.arterburn@mt.nacdnet.net, by mail, or dropped off in our office.

The Park Conservation District monthly board meetings are held at 11:00 AM on the first Tuesday of each month in the Livingston USDA Building conference room at 5242 Hwy 89 South. We review 310 permit applications, Watershed updates, NRCS updates, and Park County Planning Board updates. The public is welcome to attend.



Join MACD February 2nd - 4th for the 2026 Montana Soil Health Symposium! This year's events feature a strong line up of experienced producers, researchers, and soil health professionals sharing practical insights from the field!

Visit mtsoilhealth.org to learn more!

20
26WESTERN MONTANA
GRAZING &
AGRICULTURE
CONFERENCE

Missoula, January 29 & 30

Gerald W. Marks Exploration Center & Rocky Mountain Gardens

Scan to Register



only \$75

\$100 after
January 14th

Keynotes:

Day 1

DENNY IVERSON*Surviving and Thriving in a Drying Climate*

Day 2

SARA KEOUGH*How Stewardship of the Land Supports
Human & Ecological Health*Planned Sessions:

- *Meat is Medicine*
- *Cover Crops for Organics*
- *Creative Land Access Solutions*
- *Weed Control in Regenerative Ag*
- *Small Acreage Livestock Panel & Farm Design*
- *Ag Business Training*
- *Soil Fertility*

Questions?

Call 406-258-3430 or
office@missoulacd.org

»»» FREE WELL WATER TEST KITS:

Human health related groundwater quality testing suggestions:

- Nitrate and Bacteria (E. coli and total coliform) should be tested regularly, ideally every year.
- Lead can be a concern if household plumbing was installed prior to the mid-1990s, especially if well water is corrosive.
- Copper can be an issue if household plumbing includes copper and well water is corrosive.
- Arsenic, Copper, Fluoride, Lead, Nitrate, Selenium have been found above the human health threshold in this and/or a neighboring county.



Stop by the Conservation District office to pick up a free water test kit provided by MSU Extension Well Educated Program. Follow the instructions included in the kit and mail the water sample and payment to the lab by priority mail.



Thursday, January 22 • 7-8:30 pm mt

RANCH TECH - GPS Tags & Drone Seeding

Technology is changing the way ranchers manage land and livestock. Join rancher Ryan Lankford as he shares how 701x GPS ear tags help him monitor cattle from anywhere, giving new meaning to “keeping an eye on the herd.” Then, rancher Steve Kenyon will demonstrate how fall frost seeding with drones can make forage establishment easier, faster, and more efficient.

Thursday, February 5 • 7-8:30 pm mt

RANCH HEALTH - Cattle Vaccination Best Practices

Dr. Katie Rein of Crazy Mountain Veterinary Service will share practical, hands-on guidance for livestock vaccination, covering needle size selection, proper injection sites, and the differences between subcutaneous and intramuscular methods. This session is ideal for ranch hands, interns, spouses, or friends who assist with livestock care, as well as experienced ranchers seeking a refresher or those who were never formally taught vaccination techniques.

Thursday, February 19 • 7-8:30 pm mt

RANCH WATER - Low-Tech, High-Impact Restoration

Sometimes the simplest solutions have the biggest impact. Paul Jones with Tomichi Creek Ecosystem Services will explore Low-Tech Process-Based Restoration, a hands-on approach to rebuilding natural water systems. Learn how mimicking beaver dams can improve water retention, restore riparian function, and boost drought resilience using minimal materials and practical techniques that bring lasting benefits to your land and livestock.

Thursday, March 5 • 7-8:30 pm mt

RANCH INSIGHTS - Sheep Industry Takeaways for Beef

Over the past 75 years, the sheep industry has faced challenges that mirror pressures in the beef sector. From shifting consumer preferences and import competition to labor shortages and grazing losses, these experiences offer valuable lessons for cattle producers. Brent Roeder, MSU Extension Sheep Specialist, will share insights from the sheep industry’s history and what ranchers should consider in navigating changing markets and policies.



*Register for this free webinar series
at RanchStewards.org/events/!*



RANCHERS
— STEWARDSHIP ALLIANCE —



GOATS IN THE CRAZIES

FWP observed 256 total mountain goats in 86 groups (the largest group we observed was primarily a nanny-kid group with 16 total goats). We classified 207 adults/non-kids (inclusive of billies, nannies, and yearlings of both sexes) and 49 kids (Figure 1). This resulted in 23.7 kids per 100 non-kids. Although goat distribution was heavier in the the southern half of the survey area (Figure 1, Table 1), we did observe more goats in the Loco Mountain subunit than in recent prior surveys.

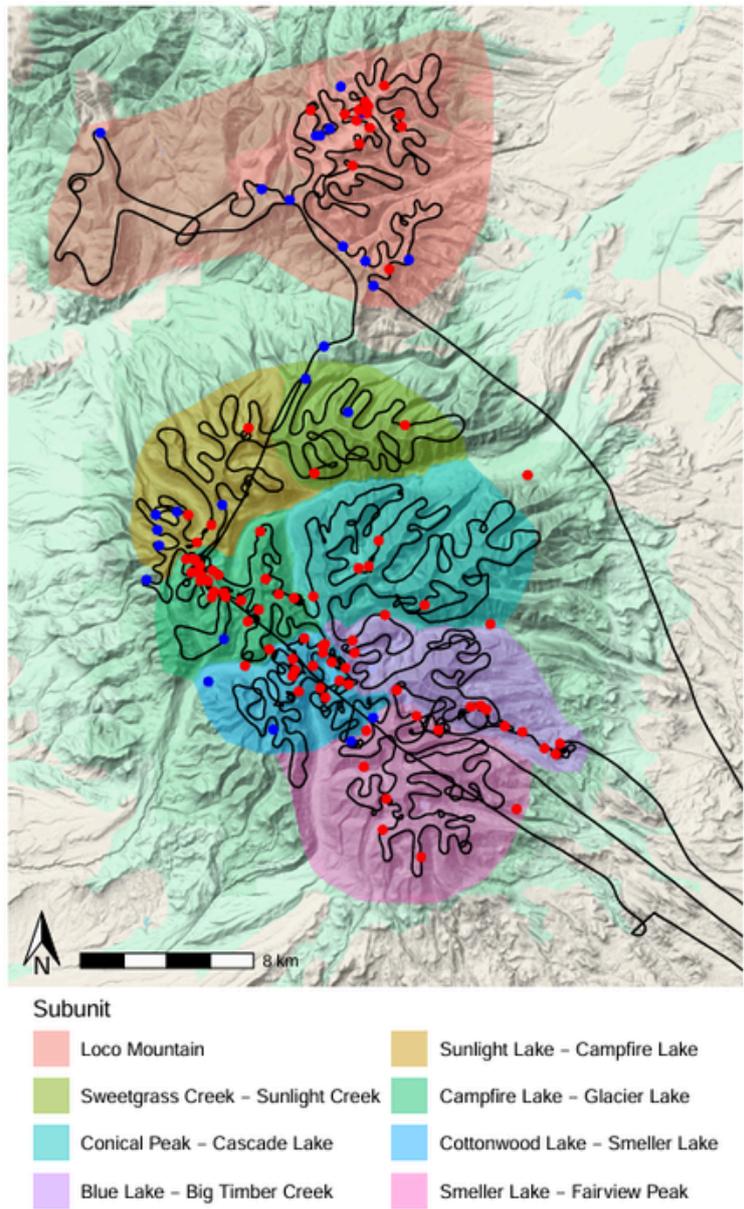


Figure 1: Flight path and locations of mountain goat groups (red) and incidental observations of other species (blue) during the 2025 survey of the Crazy Mountains (HD 313). Shaded polygons indicate distribution subunits. Note that the location recorded east of the survey area resulted from a GPS malfunction.

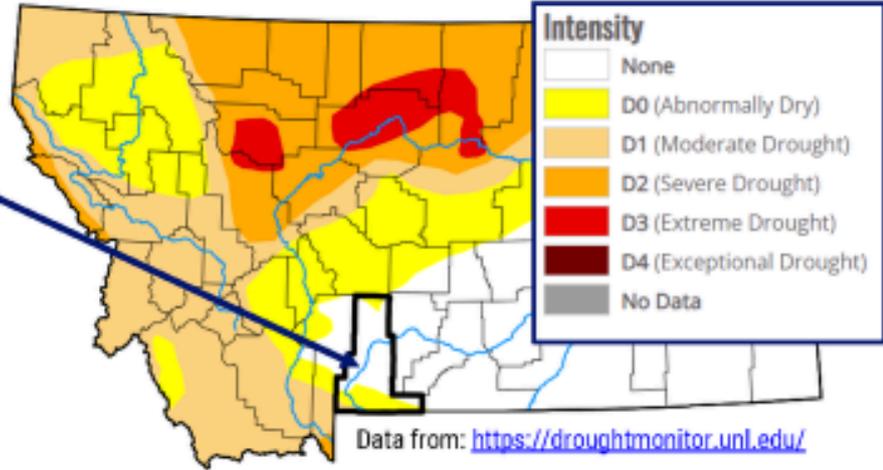
Upper Yellowstone Water Supply Report December 11, 2025



The Montana Department of
**Natural Resources
& Conservation**

US DROUGHT MONITOR

Drought conditions have improved through the fall. Only 3% of Park County remains in D1, moderate drought, and 27% is in D0, abnormally dry.



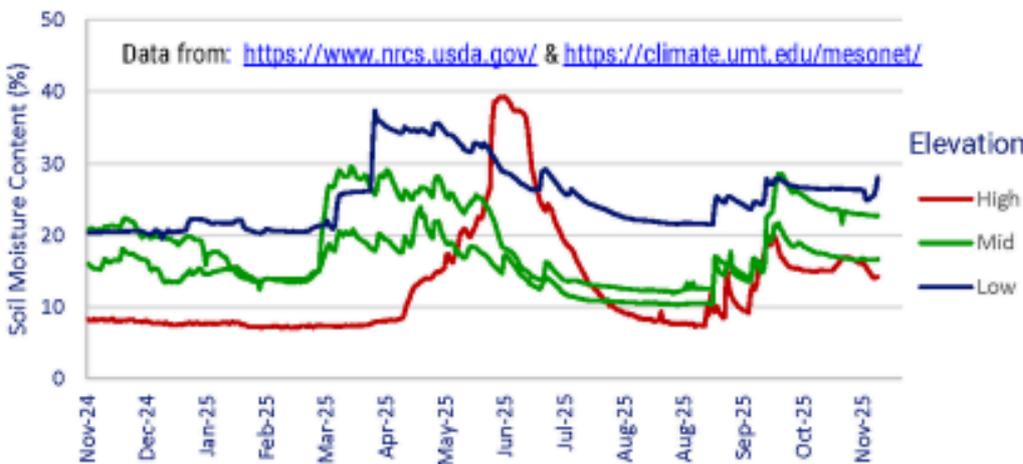
Data from: <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

Drought status progression



SOIL MOISTURE

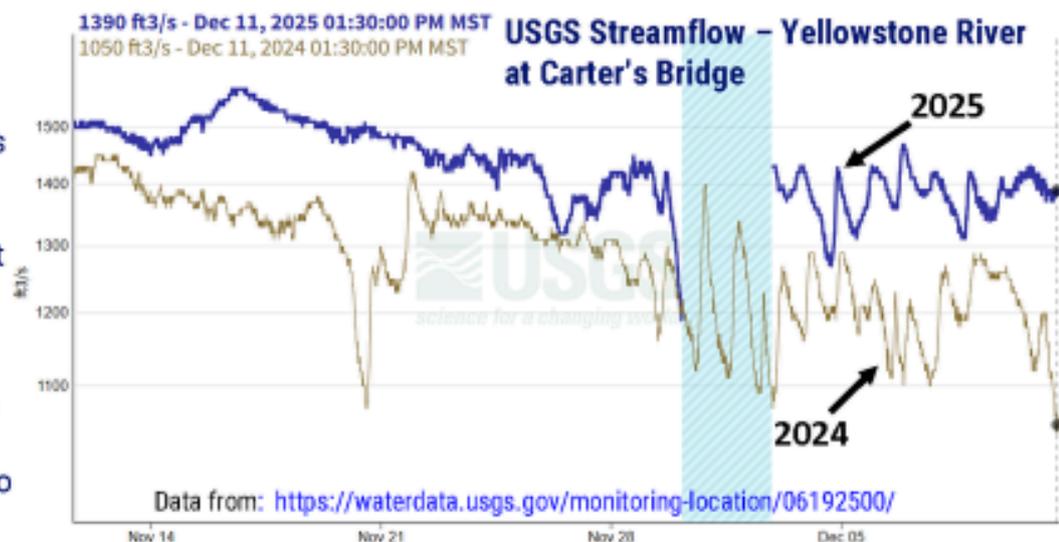
Basin soil moisture across elevations



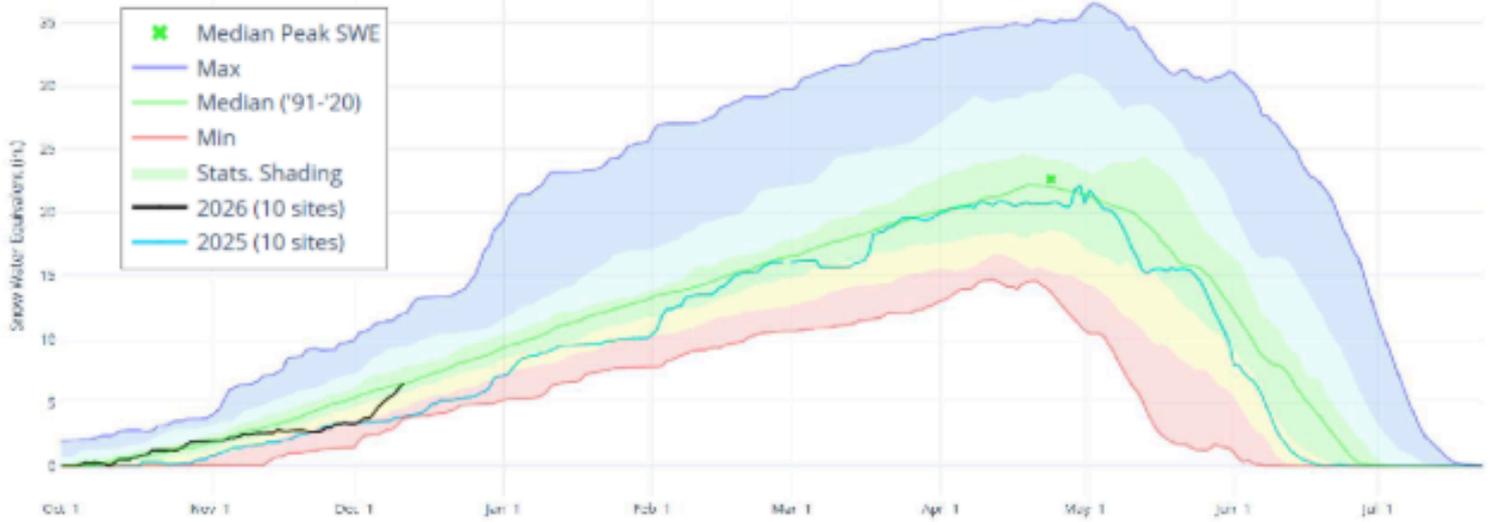
Monitoring sites show that soil moisture across all elevations has remained steady after an increase in September and October from fall precipitation. The increase occurred across all reported soil depth (4, 8, and 20 inches), not just at the soil surface. With soil moisture at all elevation above this time last year and precipitation in the forecast, soil moisture could be replenished and in good condition going into this winter.

STREAMFLOW

The Yellowstone River at Carter's Bridge was ice affected in early December but is now reporting discharge and showing fluctuations in response to recent precipitation. Discharge typically continues to drop through the fall and winter, but despite being below 2024 and median flows for most of the year, discharge is now above 2024 and about equal with median flow. With warm temperatures and rain in the forecast, flows will likely continue to fluctuate.

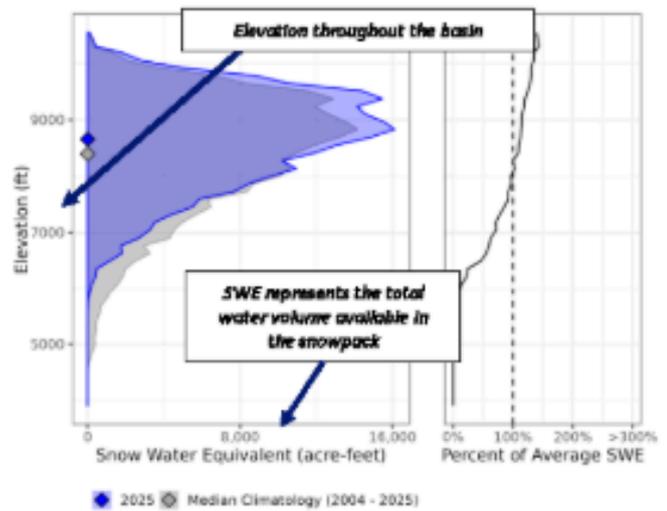


SNOWPACK CONDITIONS

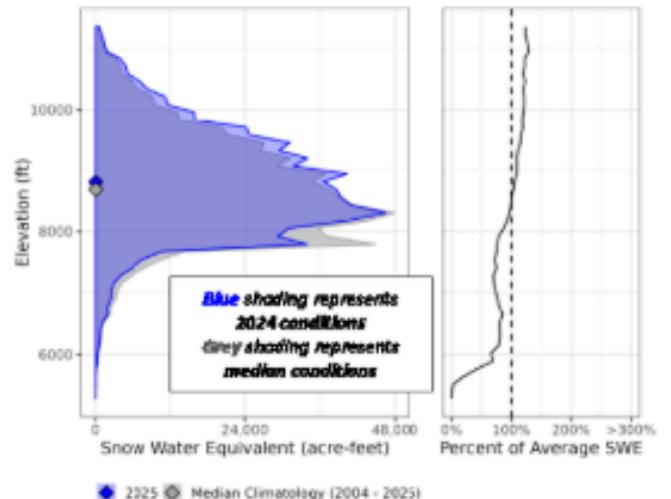


SNOTEL sites in the basin indicate snowpack is currently 100% of the 1991-2020 median, higher than this time last year (2025 Water Year). Hypsometric SWE graphs represent snowpack modeled across all elevations. Current snowpack across elevations is 101% of normal in the Upper Yellowstone, with SWE above normal at high elevations and below normal at low elevations. SWE is 100% of normal in Yellowstone Headwaters with a similar trend to the Upper Yellowstone.

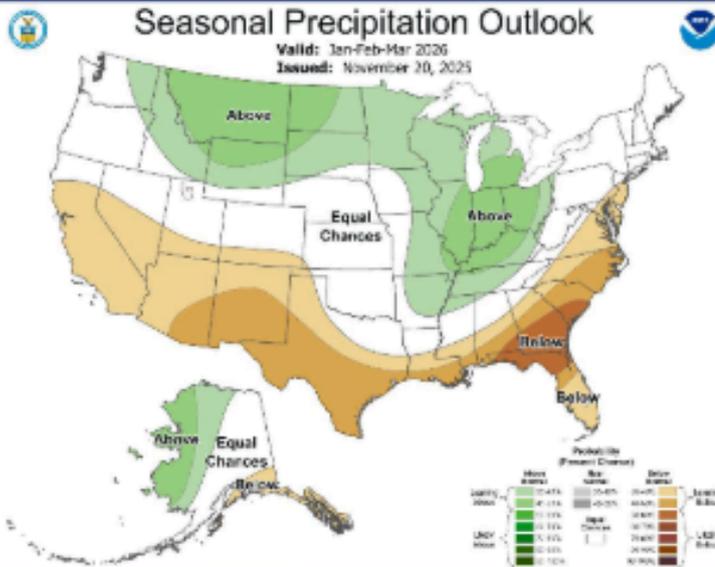
Hypsometric-SWE for Upper Yellowstone (HUC8: 10070002)
2025-12-11 (101% of Normal)
Data from: <https://drought.climate.umt.edu/>



Hypsometric-SWE for Yellowstone Headwaters (HUC8: 10070001)
2025-12-11 (100% of Normal)



SEASONAL OUTLOOK



Data from: <https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/90day/>

Short term forecasts show warm temperatures and above average precipitation. Seasonal forecasts predict below average temperatures and above average precipitation for Jan-Mar. This is good news for snowpack accumulation and soil moisture retention. Cold temperatures are needed to lock in soil moisture for the winter. We transitioned into La Niña in October. La Niña conditions are expected to persist through Jan-March of 2026 before transitioning back into ENSO-Neutral.

Produced by: Raeya Gordon
Hydrologist, Montana DNRC
raeya.gordon@mt.gov

OPPORTUNITIES AND INFORMATION:

- Do you need supplemental irrigation water? Please contact the Park Conservation District to learn more about applying for a **reserved water authorization**.

>>> CWD SURVEILLANCE IN MONTANA

MT Fish Wildlife and Parks encourage all hunters to submit samples from their harvested cervids (deer, elk, and moose). Remember that you must either leave the brain and spinal column at the kill site or dispose of it in the trash/landfill.

Unfortunately, FWP will not be able to staff a CWD sampling station in Livingston this year, but other options for having your animals sampled include:

Bring your animal (or head with at least 4 inches of neck remaining) to one of the FWP sampling stations across the state. A list of station locations, hours, and a map are available here:

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/6de1ebaa25c64c048ae162306940a5af/page/Station-List>

Learn to collect and submit lymph node samples on your own:

<https://fwp.mt.gov/conservation/chronic-wasting-disease/get-your-animal-sampled>

Depending on the staffing level, I may be able to collect samples at my normal check stations. However, it may take some time depending on the number of other hunters passing through the station.



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(406) 946-3007
www.parkcd.org

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**To opt in or out of Park CD emails, please contact Kelly Arterburn*