

GATHERING AND USING INFORMATION: TWO MONTANA PROJECTS WHERE INFORMATION RESEARCH CAN LEAD TO ON-THE-GROUND WETLAND AND STREAM PROTECTION

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As more and more people choose to build homes next to Montana's streams, rivers, lakes, and ponds, and as property values increase, the pressures to develop our state's wetlands and riparian areas are increasing—often to the detriment of fish and wildlife. Two research projects about Montana's wetlands and streams, how development projects impact those areas, and how to implement protection measures were developed to facilitate on-the-ground protection of these important resources. The first publication, *A Planning Guide for Protecting Montana's Wetlands and Riparian Areas*, explains how impacts to these areas can be avoided by land use planning decisions made at the local level. An overview of the handbook will be presented, along with examples of how communities in Montana have used the principals outlined in this book to protect stream and wetland resources. The second publication, *Impacts of the 404 Permit Program on Wetlands and Waterways in Montana and Recommendations for Program Improvement*, examines 13 years of information on Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, administered by the Army Corps of Engineers, to identify where and how development projects are impacting Montana's streams and wetlands.