




BITTER ROOT
Water
FORUM

Clean Water
for the
Bitterroot



The Bitter Root Water Forum is a community driven organization that supports agriculture, community, and recreation by protecting, enhancing, and restoring the Bitterroot watershed.





Bitter Root Water Forum

The Water Forum is the only conservation organization that works exclusively in and for the Bitterroot watershed. We honor our traditional goals of bringing people together to understand our watershed while striving to preserve water quality and wildlife habitat.





Mission & Vision

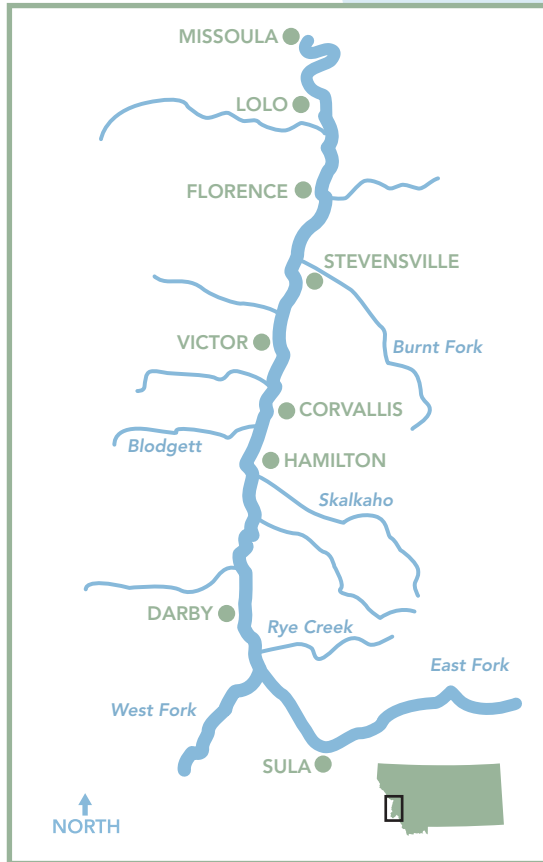
Our goal is a healthy and productive watershed that sustains abundant, thriving fish and wildlife, while providing social and economic vitality for local communities.



We are working for the day when:

- Residents and visitors appreciate how integral the Bitterroot River is to the valley's social, ecological, and economic well-being and make caring for and protecting the river a top priority.
- The Bitterroot River system provides for diverse uses while achieving its potential as a world-class fishery with optimum habitat and water quality.






The Bitterroot River Watershed

Located in the Rocky Mountains of western Montana, the Bitterroot watershed encompasses 2,899 square miles. Running through the heart of the watershed, the mainstem of the Bitterroot River flows north over 80 miles, from the confluence of the East and West Forks near Darby, to where it enters the Clark Fork River in Missoula.

The watershed is bordered by the crest of the Bitterroot Mountains to the west and the Sapphire Mountains to the east, and is largely contained within Ravalli County. The Bitterroot watershed is characterized by a wide valley and meandering river channel with riparian forest and floodplain.



Water resources
make the Bitterroot
an incredible place to live,
work, and recreate.



Challenges



Ravalli County is one of the fastest growing counties in Montana, creating mounting pressure on the valley's limited water resources

Because of the removal of streamside vegetation, grazing in riparian areas, flow modifications, and other actions, water quality in the Bitterroot River and many of its tributaries does not fully support aquatic life, drinking water, irrigation, and recreation.

Many streams have water quality issues like excess sedimentation/siltation and nutrients, increasing temperatures, and modified flows.

If resources are not directed towards finding local solutions to problems in the Bitterroot watershed, water quality will decline.



Approach & Successes

The Water Forum works to ensure clean water for this and future generations through a twofold approach:



1. Watershed education for youth and adults, reaching thousands of people annually. Youth education provides easy and reliable access to conservation education in schools and in the field through partnerships with area educators. Adult education is community oriented and addresses local issues of importance like snowpack, drought, and water rights.

2. Restoration projects improve the health of our watershed and our communities. The Water Forum has successfully completed more than one dozen projects from Sula to Missoula.

Our projects:

- Improve fish and wildlife habitat
- Reduce stream temperatures and siltation
- Enhance water quality



Education
programs
engage youth
in resource
conservation.





Strategic Goals & Priorities 2021-2025

We have prioritized
five goals to guide our
operations for the next
five years.

1

Improve the health of the Bitterroot River and its tributaries

A healthy and productive watershed sustains fish and wildlife populations, supports agriculture, and provides social and economic security for local communities.

- Increase the quantity and impact of restoration projects
- Sustain a healthy fishery through projects that improve water quality, fish passage and habitat
- Promote agricultural and ecological sustainability by improving water delivery and management

Engage and inform our community on the importance of a healthy watershed

Build a community who understands that watershed health is key to the social and economic health of the Bitterroot Valley.

- Create awareness of the importance of community-based conservation
- Motivate citizens to care for our watershed
- Partner with local schools and educators to inspire future stewards





3 Strengthen partnerships to accelerate advancements in watershed health

Engaging partners will leverage resources and greatly enhance our ability to tackle local issues.

- Expand agricultural advisory capacity to better support farmers and ranchers by better understanding their challenges
- Improve partnerships with organizations and agencies
- Seek opportunities to promote the connection between agricultural and recreational communities

4

Recruit and retain a committed and diverse board of directors and a talented, knowledgeable staff

People drive watershed restoration and education. Attracting and retaining great board and staff will significantly expand our impact in the watershed.

- Hire an Education Coordinator to realize potential for education and information sharing
- Recruit, train and retain a highly performing board to guide strategic direction
- Provide competitive benefits and compensation to attract and keep staff to reduce turnover and maximize output





5

Strengthen our financial position to ensure our vision of a healthy watershed is achieved


Restoration projects and educational offerings are limited only by funding availability.

- Increase unrestricted giving from individuals to greatly expand conservation impact
- Enhance opportunities for business sponsorships because when the river thrives, the local economy thrives
- Develop targeted donor engagement opportunities that allow people to learn about and invest in the work



Clean water takes work;
that's why the
Water Forum is here.





Bringing the community
together to protect,
enhance, and restore the
watershed we all rely on.

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