



JRWC Drought Management Plan

Background

The purpose of the Drought Management Plan is to reduce resource damage and to aid in the equitable distribution of water resources during water critical periods. The plan is a voluntary effort involving local interests including agriculture, conservation groups, anglers, municipalities, businesses, and government agencies.

The first Drought Management Plan was prepared and approved by the Jefferson River Watershed Council on 25 July, 2000. The plan was implemented for five years (2000 through 2004) and increased flow at the target location (Waterloo Gage below Fish Creek Canal) was documented by monitoring river and irrigation canal flows during the period. The drought management plan goal of maintaining at least 50 cfs at Waterloo was not always met during these years, but cooperation by water users helped improve flows at this critical location. Prior to developing the drought plan, the Jefferson River was severely dewatered at this location during dry years, and in 1988, only 5 cfs was measured at the Waterloo Gage location.

Drought Management Plan Triggers

The 2000 version of the Drought Management Plan established flow triggers for directing actions of anglers, water users, and government agencies. The triggers were revised in February 2005 based on observations of the previous 5 years of plan implementation. As of 2007, the current drought plan triggers are listed below.

The following prescribed actions are to occur when the river flow drops below the following levels or when maximum daily water temperature exceeds 73 degrees F for three consecutive days at the Twin Bridges Gaging Station (06026500):

- **600 cfs:** The 600 cfs trigger flow at the Twin Bridges Gage serves to alert water users and anglers of declining flow conditions and requests voluntary water conservation measures and angler awareness of stress caused by fishing during periods of low flow and high water temperature. A press release will be issued to inform the public of low flow conditions on the Jefferson River.
- **280 cfs:** Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife & Parks will evaluate the need for a mandatory fishing closure throughout the Jefferson River at this flow level at the Twin Bridges Gage. Voluntary reduction of irrigation and municipal water use is also initiated when the river drops below 280 cfs, and weekly meetings with water users will be coordinated by JRWC. The meetings will update water users on inflows to the river, ditch withdrawals, and status of the flow at the Waterloo Gage to attempt to maintain a minimum flow of 50 cfs at Waterloo. The angling closure will remain in effect until flows reach or exceed 300 cfs for seven consecutive days at the Twin Bridges Gage.
- **73 Degrees F:** Independent of stream flow levels, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks can implement a mandatory time of day closure to prohibit angling throughout the Jefferson River between the hours of 2:00 PM to 12:00 AM (midnight) when maximum daily water temperature equals or exceeds 73 degrees F (23 degrees C) for three consecutive days. Lifting of summer temperature restrictions will be conducted on September 15 unless an earlier/later date is designated by the FWP Commission.

Objective: Continue implementation of the Drought Management Plan in cooperation with FW&P's, Trout Unlimited, and local irrigators.

Responsibility: JRWC Board of Directors, JRWC Coordinator, and FW&P