

Montana's large river monitoring program

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Large-river monitoring in Montana spans a wide range of stream types, varying from rivers like the Milk and the Marias to the Missouri and the Yellowstone. To date, local groups and USGS have coordinated sampling on these systems with a focus on trends monitoring. Recently, DEQ and EPA were required by consent decree to monitor and assess several large river systems. EPA sampled four large rivers in 2005 and is collaborating with DEQ on data analysis for beneficial use support determinations. The work spurred discussions on interpretation of large river data and approaches to defining "natural" or "reference" for large river systems. The workgroup identified a broader need for Montana to develop a long-term large river monitoring plan. The first step in developing the plan is to identify methods for evaluating key stressors (e.g., nutrients, sediment, temperature) and determine an approach to complete aquatic life use support determinations for large rivers.

Tina Laidlaw has a Masters Degree from the University of Georgia (1996). She has been with the EPA in Region 8 since 1999. She works on state monitoring issues and serves as the Regional Biocriteria / Nutrient Criteria Coordinator. She is currently on assignment to the EPA Montana Office to help with TMDL- related monitoring activities