

Memorandum

REPORT TO: City Commission

FROM: Jessica Ahlstrom, Water Conservation Program Manager
Shawn Kohtz, Utilities Director

SUBJECT: Authorize the City Manager to Sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Montana State University for the Installation, Maintenance, and Ongoing Operation of a Hydrometeorological Station in the Sourdough Creek Watershed

MEETING DATE: September 1, 2026

AGENDA ITEM TYPE: Agreement - Agency/Non-profit

RECOMMENDATION: Authorize the City Manager to Sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Montana State University for the Installation, Maintenance, and Ongoing Operation of a Hydrometeorological Station in the Sourdough Creek Watershed.

STRATEGIC PLAN: 6.1 Clean Water Supplies: Ensure adequate supplies of clean water for today and tomorrow.

BACKGROUND: The City of Bozeman relies on snowpack for its water supply, with 40% of its supply coming from Sourdough Creek, originating in the Sourdough watershed in the Gallatin Range. Unlike the City's other two water supply sources – Hyalite Creek watershed and Lyman Spring – the Sourdough Creek watershed lacks important instrumentation to support municipal water resource planning and effective drought management. Filling this gap is necessary to maximize the efficiency of daily operations, assess and respond to drought conditions, and forecast future available water supplies. To fill this data gap and enhance Bozeman's understanding of hydrology in the Sourdough Creek watershed, the Bozeman City Commission approved a [purchase agreement](#) with the University of Montana on July 28, 2026, for a hydrometeorological station to be installed in the Sourdough Creek watershed.

This project is a partnership between the City of Bozeman and Montana State University (MSU). The project will support the City of Bozeman in implementing effective, data-informed water resource management and will advance research at MSU by integrating emerging NASA Earth Observations with novel nature-based monitoring networks to quantify snow water equivalents and fluxes in the Sourdough Creek watershed, improving the accuracy of runoff and drought forecasting.

The attached Memorandum of Understanding outlines the roles and responsibilities for the City of Bozeman and MSU in the installation and ongoing maintenance and operation of the hydrometeorological station to be installed on City property in the Sourdough Creek watershed.

UNRESOLVED ISSUES: None.

ALTERNATIVES: As suggested by the Commission.

FISCAL EFFECTS: Total costs for this project are not to exceed \$720 per year for an annual Starlink subscription to support wireless data communications and will be paid for out of the approved Water Conservation Division budget.

Attachments:

[MOU_MSU_Sourdough Hydrometeorological Station.pdf](#)

[Exhibit 1_Site Location_Hydromet Station.pdf](#)

[Exhibit 2_Liability and Release Waiver.pdf](#)

Report compiled on: August 24, 2026