



VOL. 5 ISSUE 1 • JANUARY 2024

MISSOULA COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS

Official Newsletter

A Year In Review: Looking Back At *2023*

For the last three years Public Works has put together an annual report for our Commissioners, contributed to by all of the departments separate divisions. These facts, figures, details and photos tell a story about what each division accomplished, possible setbacks, and some with hopes and goals for the upcoming year. Much of this information is shared in this newsletter. For a full look at what each division provided, and the previous two years annual reports, you can view them on our [website](#).



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 [MslaCoPubWorks](#)

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406.258.3701 Building

406.258.4753 Roads

mcpw@missoulacounty.us

6089 Training Drive

Missoula, MT 59808

DIRECTOR'S HIGHLIGHTS

SHANE STACK, P.E.

Public Infrastructure

Construction

I am in my fifth year as the director of Public Works and I can't thank our leadership and staff at Missoula County enough. I am continually impressed with the dedication to public service and willingness to help the public, other agencies, and other county partners. The residents of Missoula County are blessed to have such a strong county.

NEWS



The fourth quarter of 2023 had some challenges. Boy Scout Bridge was closed by the Montana Department of Transportation after deterioration of the piers and pilings were discovered. Missoula County was already working towards the completion of a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) for the bridge, with the goal of submitting a grant application for RAISE and BIP funding in 2024. The 2024 federal RAISE grant application will include Sunset Hill Road, Riverview Drive, Glacier Creek Road, and Cold Creek Road Bridges. Missoula County has received \$1 million from MDT through Montana Senate Bill 536 as match funding. Missoula County is also planning to include Sunset Hill Road Bridge and the Glacier Creek Road Bridge in the 2024 federal BIP grant application as a backup in case RAISE funding is unavailable. The \$1 million in match from SB 536 will be available for the BIP grant as match. Missoula County will also need to fund match beyond the SB 536 funding for both BIP and RAISE.

The goal for Missoula County is to begin to address the five load posted bridges, and the four scour critical bridges that the county owns and maintains.

The Mullan BUILD project is complete and the closeout of the project has begun. The Mullan BUILD project was a partnership project with the City of Missoula that was scoped to construct water, wastewater, roads, sidewalks and bike lanes on Mary Jane Boulevard, England Boulevard, and George Elmer Drive. The City and County received \$13 million in BUILD grant funding, and provided the additional funding required to cover the total project cost of more than \$21 million.

I want to thank our staff for the work they do. The residents of Missoula County are lucky to have such a strong team at our Public Works Department.

As always, wishing you the best.

Rural Special Improvement Districts 2023

The Lewis & Clark RSID completed an upgrade to its community septic system using American Rescue Plan Act funds. The project included new septic tank isolation valves to aid in tank maintenance, a new dosing pump system that included changing out older sewage pumps to new energy-saving pumps and replacing the failing concrete tank chamber.

The County completed plans for the Sunset West ARPA-funded wellhouse rebuild, and construction is planned to start in 2024.

The County used \$1.5 million dollars of ARPA grant money to add numerous water system improvements to the Lolo RSID water systems including:

- Partial replacement of wells #1 and 2, including the asbestos-concrete transmission main along Glacier Drive. This water main had failed twice in 2020 resulting in the loss of water service to two-thirds of the district's customers.
- Installation of a new water line on Farm Lane. This addition allows for backup water delivery to residences on the east side of Highway 93 S, as the Glacier Drive main was the only water main supplying water to that side of town. This additional water main also increased water pressure consistency in the Farm Lane area. Previously, the neighborhood would experience fluctuating and low pressures during the summer months due to irrigation activity.
- Upgrade of a redundant water supply pipe installation and pressure control valve station on the original supply pipe added to Lolo's shopping center and the multi-family neighborhood on Napton Way, both greatly improving the neighborhood's water resource resilience.
- Replacement of two original single-valve water pressure control stations that supply the hillside neighborhoods around Ridgeway and Coulter Pines Street with modern dual-valve stations. These older valves had failed numerous times over the past 20 years, producing water outages and pressure spikes resulting in emergency repairs, homeowner damages and insurance claims.
- These projects either increased fire hydrant flow rates or provided a backup source of water to numerous areas in the water system, resulting in improved fire protection for the impacted neighborhoods.



Kelly McKeehan flushing a water main after a repair in Lolo.



ROAD DIVISION 2023

Chip Seals



Taking advantage of the gas tax revenue created by the Bridge and Road Safety and Accountability Act passed by the 2017 State Legislature, Public Works resumed chip sealing paved roads in 2020 as a preventative maintenance measure. From 2000 to 2020, Public Works had not been able to provide a chip seal program due to a static budget, increasing costs, aging equipment and an aging asphalt road network that required more repairs and reconstructs than preventative maintenance could address. 2023 was the fourth year of a renewed chip seal program with a total of 5.9 miles completed on several roads near the Wye.

Staff estimated that we could improve efficiency by completing our own chip seal work. To check that estimate, Public Works staff worked with the City of Missoula to borrow their equipment and contracted with an oil distribution vendor for material delivery. The roads chip sealed near the Wye were targeted for a very important reason: they're near our facility. This enabled us to centralize our operations to re-learn chip sealing with current staff while treating roads in the area that warranted a chip seal as the appropriate level of maintenance. Our final cost per mile was \$21,808 compared to our contracted price of \$34,574 in 2022.



Paving

- Deschamps Lane: 0.5-mile gravel road reconstruction with millings and new asphalt surfacing.
- Hamel Road: 0.06-mile new asphalt surfacing and 0.25-mile millings for a high use gravel road near Frenchtown Elementary School.
- Houle Creek Road: 0.1-mile asphalt overlay in conjunction with a railroad crossing replacement by Montana Rail Link.
- Michigan Avenue/Clyde Street: 0.12-mile cooperative asphalt resurfacing after a developer installed a water main for a residential development. The developer paid the County the equivalent of their proposed asphalt repairs and we re-surfaced the entire road.
- Indreland Road: 1.07-mile millings on a high-volume gravel road.
- Butler Creek Road: 1.52-mile millings on a high-volume gravel road.
- Touchette Lane: 0.54-mile millings on a high-volume gravel road.
- Mill Creek Road (Frenchtown): 1.03-mile millings on a high-volume gravel road.

Highlights For 2023

Bridges ←

- Van Buren Street Footbridge: Staff replaced timber decking and asphalt surfacing as a cooperative surfacing and drainage improvement project with the City of Missoula Parks & Recreation Department. They can now connect to their improvements on the Kim Williams Trail.
- Moccasin Lane Bridge: Staff replaced a weight restricted concrete bridge with a large culvert. Originally planned to be an in-kind replacement with a new concrete structure, staff were able to reduce the \$240,000 cost estimate to approximately \$45,000 by installing a culvert.
- Tower Street/3rd Street Culvert: At some point in the mid-1990's, the upstream half of an existing 49-inch x 33-inch x 170-foot culvert was replaced with a 72-inch round culvert. This culvert carries overflow irrigation water and high spring groundwater, and the old, downstream half of the culvert was starting to crush at the outlet. Staff replaced the failing half of the culvert with a 72-inch round culvert matching the existing upstream section.
- O'Brien Creek Bridge: Staff replaced the asphalt surfacing on the bridge as well as its approaches.
- Maclay Bridge: After the winter conditions, staff replaced three sections (approximately 30 linear feet) of the steel/concrete deck and asphalt surfacing. While the South Avenue Bridge project continues to develop, the existing Maclay Bridge needs to be maintained as the primary crossing of the Bitterroot River in the urban area. Staff made similar repairs to other sections in 2019 and 2021.
- Blackfoot River Bridge: The 1907 truss structure carrying Sunset Hill Road over the Blackfoot River showed signs of failure in the timber decking through the heavy summer use. This led to staff replacing the first 16 feet of the south end of the timber deck.

Van Buren Street Footbridge



More Highlights For 2023

WELCOME TO THE BUILDING DIVISION

A Look Back At 2023

The Building Division employs two code veterans along with several new people. Rita Hagler and Jill Herrick have been essential in the successful orientation, training and motivation of all of the new employees. Once another fulltime permit technician is hired, the Division will be fully staffed to better handle the ever-growing responsibilities of the building industry in Missoula County.



Meet your Building Division! Back row (L - R) Kevin Heisler, Kyle Young, Glenn Fraser, Mark Price. Middle row (L-R) Steve Hutchings, Rita Hagler, Jill Herrick, James Fivecoats. Front row (L-R) Susan Hopkins, Emma Aschbacher (Not pictured: Erik Farnham)

Highlights For 2023

- Odyssey, our permitting software, was upgraded by our IT team to help the end user as well as allow more expeditious reviews internally.
- Staff updated the [MissoulaCounty.build](https://www.missoulacounty.build) website to reflect current processes for permit applications as well as new zoning regulations and cannabis/alcohol renewal clarifications.
- There are three options for scheduling inspections: [online](#), via phone at 406-258-3701 (Option #1), or via email to permits@missoulacounty.us. Inspectors are now able to send results via email to anywhere with cell service upon return.
- Residents throughout Missoula County are now eligible to receive a \$500 rebate for replacing water heaters in their homes with certain energy-efficient alternatives, thanks to a rebate program launched last summer. Both city and county residents are eligible for a \$500 rebate for a heat pump water heater AND an additional \$75 for filling out a satisfaction survey. See [ElectrifyMissoula.org](https://www.electrifymissoula.org) for more information.
- Welcome, James Fivecoats! James was hired as a permit specialist but has accepted the full-time plans examiner (currently in training) job in the department. With his past construction, drafting and Department of Revenue experience, he is a great addition to our team.

More Highlights For 2023

•Jill Herrick transitioned into the plans examiner role part-time and has done an excellent job with plan review. She is currently training James Fivecoats to become our next full-time plans examiner and Jill will return to doing special projects part-time.

•Kevin Heisler became our new building official this year, which left an open spot for Kyle Young to be hired as his replacement as a combination building inspector. Kyle is continuing to expand his knowledge to become a fully certified combination inspector. With his current certifications, he can conduct field inspections specific to his training as well as gain valuable knowledge by working with other inspectors.

•Although we are seeing a slight decrease in permit applications, our staff is very busy catching up on the numerous permits that remain on hold pending missing information from the applicant. Permit applications are considered abandoned if not pursued in good faith by the applicant per International Building Code Chapter 1 Section 105.3.2.



Permits Issued in 2023

PERMIT SUMMARY TOTALS

BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED = 1008
 ELECTRICAL PERMITS ISSUED = 823
 PLUMBING PERMITS ISSUED = 316
 MECHANICAL PERMIT ISSUED = 668
 ADDRESS/APPROACH PERMITS ISSUED = 244
 EXCAVATION PERMITS ISSUED = 70