

ROCKY BOY'S/NORTH CENTRAL MONTANA REGIONAL WATER SYSTEM

Project Goal

- To ensure a safe and sustainable rural, municipal, and industrial water supply for residents of the Rocky Boy's Reservation and citizens residing in Chouteau, Hill, Liberty, Pondera, Teton, Glacier, and Toole counties of Montana.

System Summary

- The Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy's Reservation and the State of Montana, through the Reserved Water Rights Commission, negotiated a settlement of the Tribe's Water Rights Claims. The Compact, ratified by the 1997 Montana Legislature and signed by President Clinton in December of 1999, provided a water allocation of 10,000-acre feet to the Tribe from Lake Elwell (Tiber Reservoir) south of Chester, Montana. In addition to providing a water supply for the Tribe, the project was also expanded to provide water service to residents of Chouteau, Hill, Liberty, Pondera, Teton, Glacier, and Toole counties of Montana. On December 12, 2002, President Bush signed S. 2017, The Rocky Boy's/North Central Montana Regional Water System Act of 2002 (PL107-331, 116 Stat. 2859) as the final step in the Federal approval process and the beginning of a project to improve the quality of life for the Tribe and residents of north central Montana.
- The system is comprised of Core and Non-Core Systems. The Core System consists of an intake structure, treatment plant, storage, pumping, transmission pipeline, and on-reservation infrastructure to provide water from Lake Elwell to the residents of the Rocky Boy's Reservation.
- The Non-Core System consists of pipelines, storage, and pumping facilities to deliver water from the Core System to the participating systems, including communities, rural water districts, Hutterite colonies and other rural water users in north central Montana. The Non-Core System is represented by the North Central Montana Regional Water Authority (NCMRWA). NCMRWA was created to administer the implementation of the Non-Core system through an Interlocal Agreement with the taxing entities participating in the Rocky Boy's/NCMRWS project. There are currently 18 public water systems participating in the Non-Core System.

Funding Summary

- The 2002 approval did not provide funding; therefore, project funding has been part of the annual budget approved by Congress. A significant improvement to the Federal funding was achieved with the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill (BIL), which provided \$1 Billion for the currently authorized regional water projects. However, at the current rate of inflation, it is projected that annual appropriations will also be needed for the projects to be completed in a timely manner.
- NCMRWA is financially responsible for the matching funds of 24% of the Core System and 100% of the Non-Core System. The legislation authorizes 80% Federal funding with a required local match of 20% with 10% coming from the Authority members and 10% from the State of Montana. \$157 million in Federal funds have been obligated to the Non-Core System with \$61M expended and \$94M remaining as of December 31, 2025. In addition, there is \$27.5M of BIL funding available to be obligated. The Authority has expended \$5.8 million in local dollars with a projected obligation of \$26 million for Federal funds obligated to date. The State of Montana has expended \$22.4 million, which exceeds its 10% match requirement for currently obligated funds.

Completed Segments

- To address the immediate challenges experienced by participating water systems, NCMRWA developed an implementation plan of interim water service scenarios, whereby member entities work together to leverage existing resources. Five interim service scenarios have been completed, which include North Havre County Water District (CWD) receiving water service from the City of Havre; South Chester CWD and Riverview Colony receiving water service from the Tiber CWD; Brady County Water & Sewer District (CWSD) receiving water service from the City of Conrad; the City of Cut Bank receiving a portion of its water from the City of Shelby; and Nine Mile CWD and Oilmont CWD receiving water from the City of Shelby.
- The Big Sandy Segment, Loma CWD Segment and Tiber Segment Pump Station were completed in 2024 and the Hill CWD Segment was completed in April 2026. These systems will be placed in service when treated water from the Core System is available.
- The north end of the Havre segment was completed in 2024. This segment creates a loop from highway 87 to the west end tank along with a second point of delivery at Wilson Avenue and 9th Street West. This segment can be placed in service utilizing the west end tank to provide water to unserved developments in the vicinity of Havre.

Segments under Construction or Planned

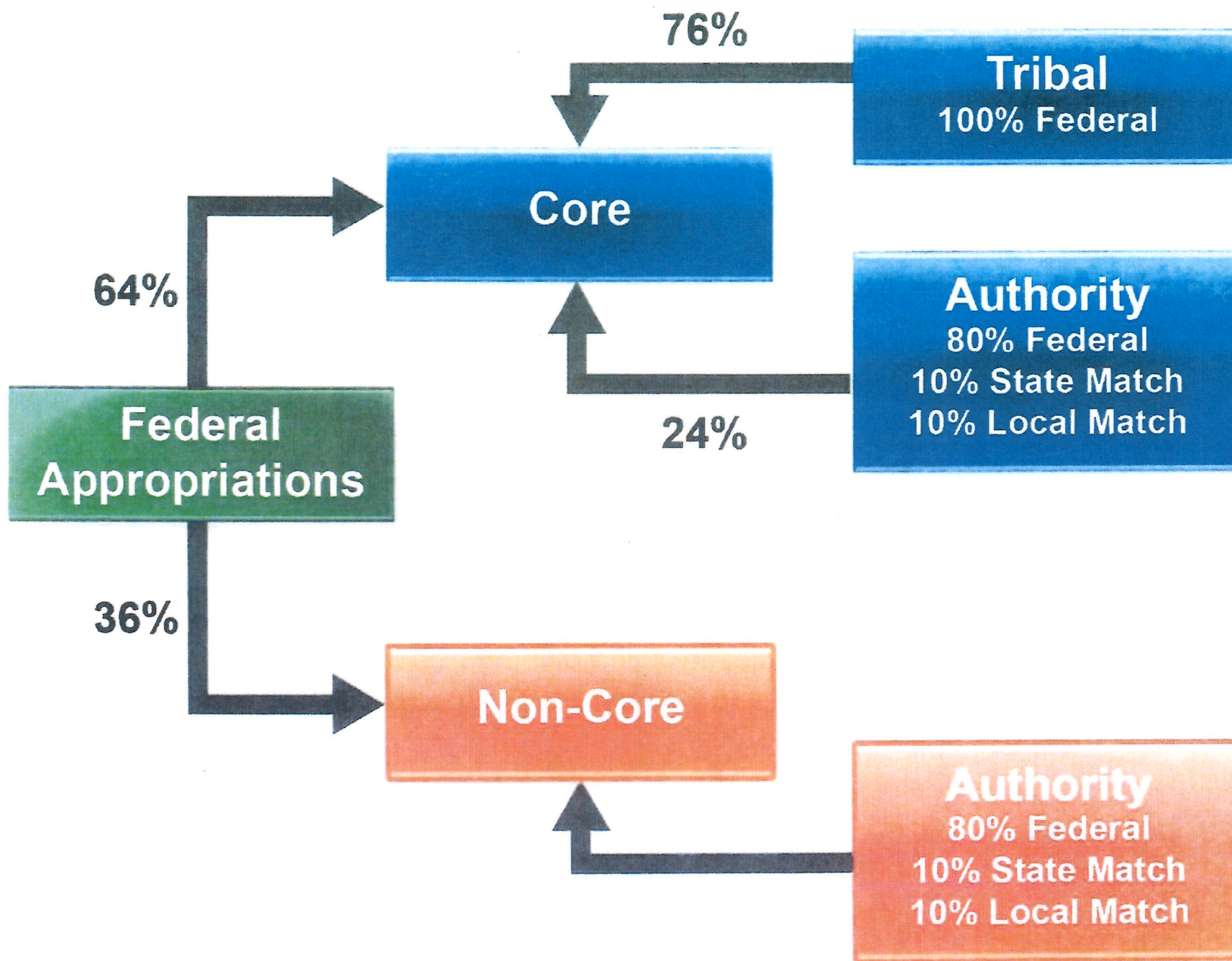
- The Core System has installed approximately 47 miles of the 54 miles of steel core pipeline. 21 miles of the installed miles are substantially complete. The first phase of the water treatment plant construction and the ground storage reservoir have been completed. The remaining pipeline, metering facilities, water treatment plant site work, fire suppression systems, backup generator, filter media, and intake electrical components are all expected to be completed by March 2028.
- The remainder of the Havre segment from Old Post Road to Box Elder is scheduled to be bid under 3 separate contracts. The section bid this spring consists of approximately 4 miles of pipeline and the meter facility. This first section is expected to be completed by May 2027. The remaining 2 sections are anticipated to be bid in Fall 2026.

Future Segments

- Due to increased costs and related concerns expressed by the Bureau of Reclamation, the State of Montana, and the NCMRWA board of directors, potential alternative water supply and treatment concepts are being evaluated to complete the project under the current project ceiling to best manage local cost share contributions. The evaluation of potential alternative water supply and treatment concepts is not intuitive and will require a complex life cycle analysis that includes the consideration of operations, maintenance, and replacement costs.

The NCMRWA remains fully committed to implementing the project goals of providing a reliable amount of safe and aesthetically pleasing drinking water to its rural community members across north central Montana. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to learn more about the Rocky Boy's/NCMRWS project. Thank you.

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Segment Core Pipeline to Conrad

- Task Order
 - Preliminary Design
 - Preliminary Survey
 - Permission to Access
 - Existing Easement Review

