

WHAT PRIVATE WELL OWNERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT



DROUGHT & GROUNDWATER IN THE GALLATIN VALLEY



The Lower Gallatin Watershed, like much of the Mountain West, is in a year of below-average precipitation which will lead to reduced water availability. During dry years, groundwater levels generally decline due to reduced recharge, increasing the risk of water shortages for private well owners.

Groundwater in much of the Gallatin Valley aquifer is interconnected, meaning pumping and water use in one area can influence groundwater conditions nearby and affect neighboring wells. Conserving water helps protect this shared resource and supports neighboring wells throughout the valley.

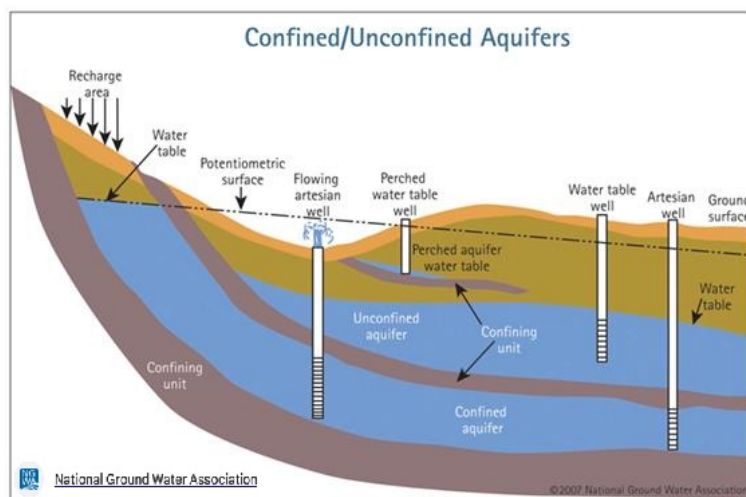
Could my well be vulnerable?

Wells with a static water level less than 20 feet may be more susceptible to drought-related impacts. Static water level is the *natural depth of water in a well when it is not being pumped*. Static water level and your pump depth setting are key aspects of how much water is available for use.

Every well is unique, and vulnerability depends on several factors. Contact Gallatin Local Water Quality District (GLWQD) for more information on well vulnerability.

You may be at greater risk during dry years if your well:

- Has a low static water level in the well casing.
- Is relatively shallow compared to nearby/newer wells.
- Is located in an area where groundwater levels commonly decline in a drought period.
- Was drilled in 1980s or earlier, when many wells were constructed at shallower depths than today.



The Assessment of Domestic Well Vulnerability to Drought in the Gallatin Valley shows which areas are more likely to have wells that could run low or dry during a drought.

Important: Higher-risk areas do not mean every well is vulnerable. This map highlights locations where wells with limited water availability are more common. Wells outside the mapped risk areas may still be vulnerable to drought. Well owners should not assume their wells are free from drought risk and are encouraged to follow the conservation measures outlined below in a drought year, regardless of location.

89,513
people in Gallatin County
are affected by drought

- No change since last week
- No change since last month

100%
of people in Gallatin
County are affected by
drought

- No change since last week
- No change since last month

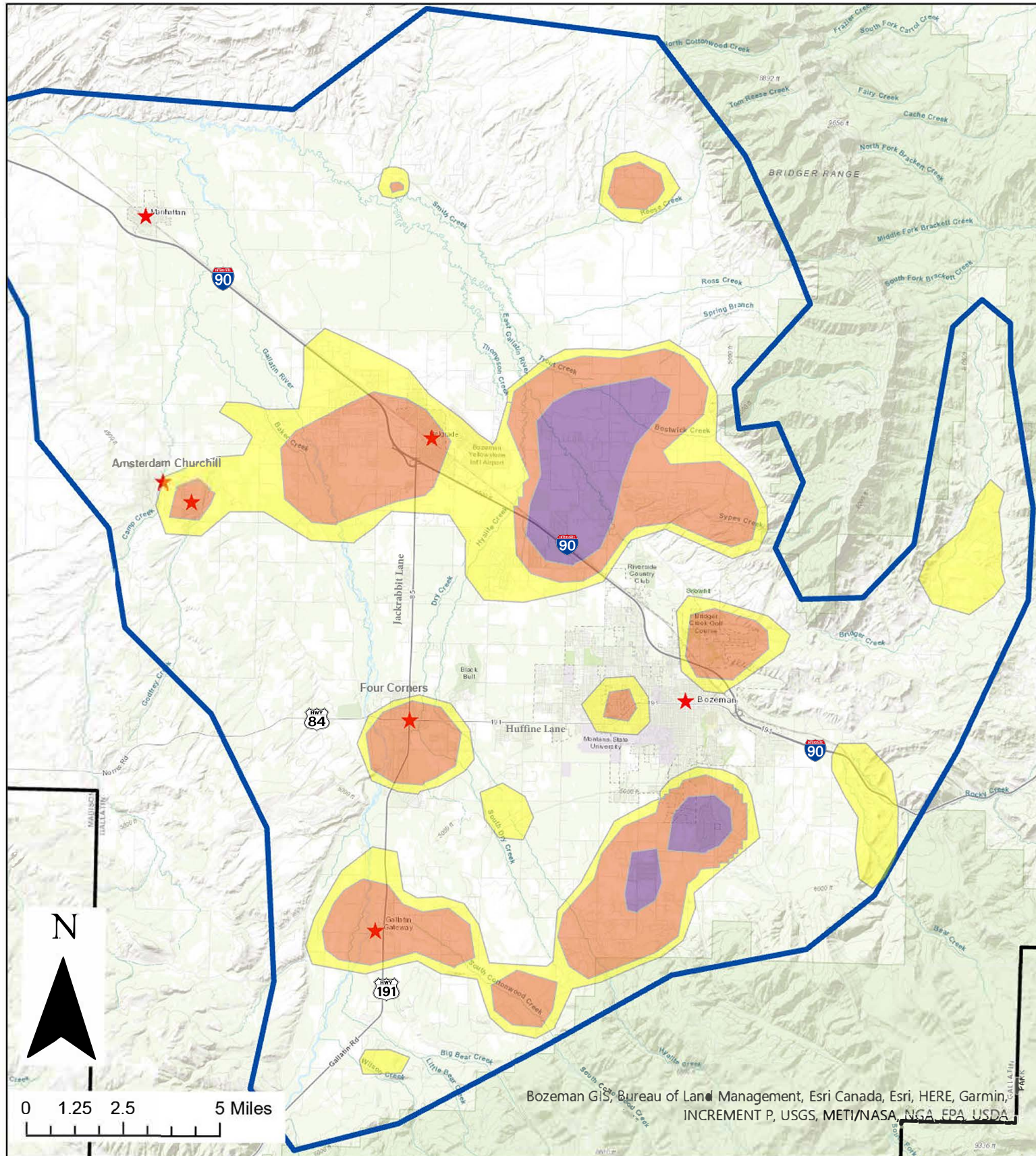
38th
driest May on record, over
the past 132 years

↓ 0.67
inches from normal

10th
driest year to date over the
past 132 years (January-
May 2026)

↓ 2.44
inches from normal

Data pulled from Drought Conditions for Gallatin County from Drought.gov on 6/24/2026



Assessment of Domestic Well Vulnerability to Drought in the Gallatin Valley

- Legend**
- Vulnerable Well Areas gridcode
 - Assessment Area
 - County Boundary
 - Cities and Towns
 - Moderate Risk
 - High Risk
 - Highest Risk

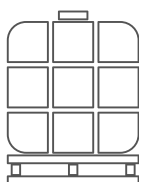
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Be Prepared

Having this information available can save valuable time if assistance is needed. This information can be used to determine what options are available if you experience a loss of water from your private well.



Build an Emergency Water Supply

Store enough drinking water for at least three days.

FEMA Recommendation: 1 gallon of water per person per day, plus additional water for pets.

Know Who to Call

Identify local well drillers and pump professionals before an emergency occurs. Well drillers can help determine the cause of a loss of water from your well. They can also provide solutions including lowering or replacing your pump or deepening your well.



Plan Alternative Water Sources

Know where potable and non-potable water may be available if your well experiences issues. Having non-potable water available can be important for septic systems.

Keep Important Well Information

Accessible:

- Well Log (available to be searched from Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology's Groundwater Information Center-[GWIC](#))
- GWIC ID Number ([Instructions](#) from MSU Extension Water Quality to find GWIC ID)
- Total Well Depth
- Static Water Level
- Pump Setting Depth

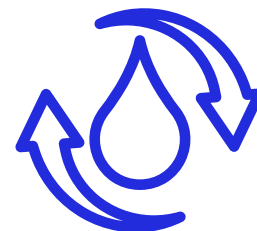


Conservation Benefits Everyone

Even if your well is not vulnerable to drought, your neighbors' wells may be. Conserving water reduces demand on groundwater resources and can help lessen stress on the aquifer, particularly during dry years.

Simple Ways to Reduce Water Use

- Limit outdoor watering of lawns and gardens.
- Avoid using well water for ponds and other non-essential purposes.
- Fix leaks promptly.
- Install low-flow fixtures.
- Run washing machines and dishwashers only when full.
- Reduce use of high-water-demand appliances such as water softeners.
- Be mindful of water use when bathing, cleaning, and laundry.



Questions?

GLWQD works to maintain and improve the quality of water resources within the district while promoting water stewardship and education.

For questions about private wells, groundwater resources, or drought preparedness, please contact GLWQD.

406-582-3145

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glwqd.org

