



Water Policy Interim Committee

68th Montana Legislature

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Sept. 13, 2024

Jared Entin, program manager
Terrestrial Hydrology Program
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Mary W. Jackson NASA Headquarters
300 E. Street SW, Suite 5R30
Washington, DC 20546

Dear Jared,

Montana legislators know that water fuels our people and economy. We also take seriously our role as legal stewards of this resource.

Because of this, we wholeheartedly support the efforts of Dr. Eric Sproles. The Montana State University professor and his team of experts at the Central Agricultural Research Center have worked for years to understand an elusive resource—prairie snow. Prairie snow provides critical soil moisture, which in turn helps produce grains and pulse crops that not only sustain local communities but feed our nation and the world.

The committee believes Dr. Sproles' team provides useful, practical research for agricultural producers. For example, they have suggested that certain farming techniques, such as planting perpendicular to prevailing winds, allowing variable heights of field stubble, planting of shelter belts, can demonstrably improve soil health and crop yields.

Dr. Sproles' research requires use of advanced methods, such as LiDAR and ortho imagery, L-band SAR, and Cosmic Ray Neutron Sensors. We would like to see his team continue their work with these technologies and others for the benefit of Montana.

We respectfully ask the Terrestrial Hydrology Program to support their efforts to better understand snowpack and water cycle dynamics from our headwaters to our prairies.

Sincerely,

Rep. Ken Walsh, chairman