

# Colstrip Water Supply

HB 368

January 15, 2026

# Executive Summary



- Since the construction of Colstrip Units 1-4, both the City of Colstrip and the Colstrip Power Plant have used water from the Yellowstone River
  - Colstrip Power Plant Owners hold a 67.27 CFS right for Industrial use
  - City of Colstrip holds a 2 CFS right for Municipal use
  
- Concern continues about the future of supply after decommissioning and the remediation of the plant
  - Colstrip Units 1&2 retired in January 2020
  - Colstrip Units 3&4 are ~40 years old, but a retirement date has not been announced by the Colstrip Power Plant Owners
  
- Colstrip Power Plant will continue to convey water for remediation activities for several decades
  - Water conveyance will continue until all remediation activities are completed
  - Remediation activities are expected to continue until the 2050 timeframe
  
- Colstrip Power Plant plans to transfer ownership of the water system to the City of Colstrip toward the conclusion of the remediation
  
- House Bill 368 sets aside funding for City of Colstrip to manage the water system
  - Funding can be used for maintenance and capital activities to run the system
  - Protects the city and its citizens from a drastic increase in fees

# Water Right #42KJ 94423-00



<b><i>Date:</i></b>	December 16, 1970
<b><i>Owners:</i></b>	Talen Montana (“Talen”) Puget Sound Energy, Inc. (“PSE”) Northwestern Corporation (“NWE”) PacifiCorp Avista Corporation (“Avista”) Portland General Electric Company (“PGE”) City of Colstrip
<b><i>Source:</i></b>	Yellowstone River
<b><i>Purpose:</i></b>	Industrial, Municipal
<b><i>Max Flow:</i></b>	69.27 CFS
<b><i>Max Volume:</i></b>	50,151 Ac-Ft
<b><i>Point of Diversion:</i></b>	Nichols Intake
<b><i>Point of Use:</i></b>	A certain area around Colstrip facilities (Units 1&2 and Units 3&4) and City of Colstrip

# Delivery from Yellowstone River and Water Use

- Nichols Pumping Station is a set of 3 electric water pumps that removes Yellowstone River water:
  - All 3 motors are the same and are rated for 9,867 GPM (or 22 CFS) at 1,304 feet total dynamic head
  - The pump motors are 3900 HP, 1200 RPM, 6900V vertical motors
  - Each pump draws about 3 MW per hour while in use
- The pumped water flows on 2 different water lines from the Nichols Pumping Station:
  - The original line for Units 1&2 is a 26" line
  - The newer line for Units 3&4 is a 34" line
  - The 2 lines run along a similar path down Highway 39 from Interstate 94 toward the City of Colstrip
  - The water lines are ~30 miles in length
- The two pipelines flow directly to the Surge Pond (Castle Rock Reservoir) that serves both the City of Colstrip and Colstrip Units 1-4
- The Colstrip Power Plant uses water for several different functions
  - Colstrip Units 3&4 use water in the production of power
  - The balance of the Colstrip Power Plant uses water for remediation activities



# Water ownership changeover and House Bill 368

- Colstrip Units 3&4 use water in the production of power. There is no set retirement date for Colstrip Units 3&4
- Even after the retirement of Colstrip Units 3&4, Colstrip Power Plant will continue to need water for remediation activities until such remediation activities are completed
- Colstrip Power Plant would then transfer ownership of the Nichols Pumping Station and associated water pipelines to the City of Colstrip
- House Bill 368 provides financial assistance for the City of Colstrip upon that transfer of ownership
  - Uses funding collected from the coal severance tax to benefit retiring coal communities
  - Financial assistance would help the city pay for staffing, maintenance and other capital activities related to the water system.

