



MISSOULA VALLEY'S SOLE SOURCE AQUIFER

About 12,000 years ago, an ice dam holding 2,000 foot deep Glacial Lake Missoula within the valleys of western Montana, burst. Flood waters moving at 386 million cubic feet per second or 60 times the flow of the Amazon River rushed overland tearing away soils and mountainsides.

The flood deposited millions of tons of cobble and gravel, which over time, filled the Missoula valley and created the Missoula valley aquifer. To learn more about Glacial Lake Missoula and the flood, visit the Montana Natural History Center's [Glacier Lake Missoula Website](#) .

Missoula's aquifer is the sole source of clean water for residents in the Missoula Valley. More than 40,000 households depend on it. Every year rainfall and snowmelt flow out of the Clark Fork River and local streams to seep down through glacial deposits and recharge this underground water source. This natural storage tank contains billions of gallons of fresh water, which in some places is only 40 feet below our feet.

Our shallow aquifer is very susceptible to contamination and is a fragile resource. Together, there are things we can do to help protect and conserve our valuable drinking water. The following are links to information and tools to help us achieve this important goal. To protect and preserve the aquifer:

- Avoid hazardous household wastes and select [alternative household products](#).
- Dispose of household hazardous wastes safely at [Hazardous Waste Days](#) .
- Prevent storm water pollution with the help of [Missoula Valley Water Quality District](#) or [City Storm Water Pollution Prevention Program](#) .
- Prevent “[backflow](#).”
- [Lower water usage](#).
- Find watershed education and pollution prevention participation opportunities at:
 - [Montana Watershed Education Network](#)
 - [Missoula Valley Water Quality District](#)
 - [Montana Department of Environmental Quality](#)
 - Montana DNRC - [Water Resources Division](#)
 - [Hidden Life of Water Video](#)