

This is a real screening from our files, with names, addresses, and record numbers redacted for the customer's privacy. Every actual report carries the full record numbers and clickable links to the official state abstracts so anyone at the table can verify each finding.

Sample Report — Bitterroot Valley Property

Water Rights Status Report — SAMPLE (identifying details redacted)

Prepared June 11, 2026 · From Montana DNRC, GWIC, and county records

The Short Version

There IS an active water right for your parcel — but it's still recorded to an owner two sales back. Ground Water Certificate 76H 1085XX-00 (domestic, lawn & garden, and stock; priority September 7, 1999) is tagged to your home parcel and remains in ACTIVE status — under the name [Prior Owner A]. It never followed the land through the sales to [Prior Owner B] and then to the current owner. This is the most common defect in Montana's records and the cheapest to fix: an ownership-update filing with your deed chain moves the certificate to your name and **keeps the 1999 priority date** — which, with the Bitterroot's water rights being finalized right now, is worth protecting. There's also a second-well question worth one phone call (details below).

What the Records Show

Property	Sample Report — Bitterroot Valley Property — [subdivision withheld], 1.89 acres ; plus adjacent 0.25-acre vacant lot (adjacent lot)
Owner of record	[Current Owner] — both parcels (geocodes 13-XXXX-XX-X-XX-XX-0000 and 13-XXXX-XX-X-XX-XX-0000)
The water right	Certificate 76H 1085XX-00 — ACTIVE, groundwater, DOMESTIC + LAWN/GARDEN + STOCK, 12 gpm, 80-ft well, priority Sept 7, 1999 . Recorded owner: [Prior Owner A] (not [Current Owner], not [Prior Owner B]). Tagged to the home parcel's geocode
The well log	GWIC #1987XX, on the home parcel: drilled Sept 10, 2002 by a licensed Montana driller, rotary, 80 ft, static water 50 ft, air-tested 30 gpm, domestic — logged under prior owner “[Prior Owner B]”
The wrinkle	The certificate predates the logged well by

three years (1999 right, 2002 well, both 80 ft). Most likely a replacement well drilled by [Prior Owner B] on the existing right — common, and fine if so — but the records don't say. DNRC can confirm whether a replacement-well notice is on file

Nothing under your name

No right or well log under [Current Owner] anywhere in Montana; statewide sweep run by owner, prior owners, geocode, and quarter-section

Vacant lot

No well, no right, nothing on file

Verify it yourself: the certificate abstract is free at gis.dnrc.mt.gov/apps/WRQS (search 76H 1085XX); well log at mbmggwic.mtech.edu (GWIC ID 1987XX).

How to Fix It

1. **File Form 608 (Water Right Ownership Update) with DNRC** for Certificate 76H 1085XX-00, attaching the recorded deed chain from [Prior Owner A] → [Prior Owner B] → [Current Owner]. This is the standard path when a right didn't follow the land — it moves the record to your name and preserves the 1999 priority. Filing fee is modest (typically \$50); no new appropriation is needed.
2. **While you're on the phone with DNRC Missoula, ask one question:** "Is there a replacement-well or well-modification record for 76H 1085XX-00, given the 2002 well log?" If yes, the file is clean once the 608 posts. If no, ask what they want — usually a simple notice that ties the 2002 well to the existing right. Worth resolving in the same errand.
3. **Read the abstract before filing** (link above) and confirm the place of use and point of diversion match your parcel as you know it. If anything in the abstract looks wrong — acreage, location, flow — note it on the 608 cover letter or ask DNRC how to correct it.
4. **Keep the certificate, the 608 confirmation, and this report with your deed.** On rural ground, "active certificate, 1999 priority, recorded in my name" is the answer that ends the water question in any future sale.

Good to Know

- **Why the 1999 date matters:** Basin 76H (the Bitterroot) is finishing its adjudication — the preliminary-decree objection window closes June 29, 2026, and the basin then moves toward a final decree and, eventually, enforcement. In any future dry-year squeeze, priority date is the pecking order. A 1999 priority beats every right filed

after it — including anything your neighbors file from here on. Fixing the name on an existing 1999 right is a far better position than the alternative (a new filing today would carry a 2026 priority).

- **Your certificate is not in the adjudication.** The decree process covers pre-1973 rights; your 1999 certificate stands on its own. The June 29 deadline isn't yours to act on — it's simply why this is a good season to get the paperwork straight.
- **The vacant lot:** if you or a future buyer ever want a well on the 0.25-acre lot, Montana now requires DNRC authorization BEFORE drilling (effective Jan 1, 2026) — the old file-after-the-fact fix is gone.
- **Nothing about your day-to-day water use changes.** The 608 is paperwork, not a permit review — it makes the state's record match the county's.

Factual screening of public records (DNRC WRQS, GWIC well-log registry, Montana Cadastral — searched June 11, 2026 by owner, prior owners, geocode, and quarter-section), not legal advice and not a title product. Very recent filings may not yet appear in public databases — DNRC Missoula can confirm by phone. Prepared by Up The Creek Research, LLC.