

# Tester to EPA: Big city water standards drain rural, frontier communities

Senator gets agency's commitment to help Montana communities afford clean drinking water

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(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – Senator Jon Tester today received a commitment from the nation's top environmental watchdog to address unique challenges in rural and frontier communities struggling to afford clean, safe drinking water.

During a Senate hearing, Tester questioned Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson on how she plans to enforce the EPA's clean water standards in rural and frontier communities.

Tester cited differences in urban water treatment plants that serve millions of people, and rural water systems that sometimes serve only a few hundred people over thousands of square miles. Tester argued that federal standards can make providing clean water in rural communities unaffordable.

"Everybody needs clean drinking water," Tester told Jackson. "If we don't have it we don't survive. But by the same token, we need to make sure that we're not eliminating the ability of communities to provide water or they will disappear. Period."

Jackson responded by saying she will "renew efforts to work at the state level" to find the best solutions for rural communities struggling under costly federal water standards.

Tester raised his concerns after hearing from Montanans at the state Rural Water Systems conference in Great Falls last month, and after talking with small rural water users as he has traveled across the state.

Tester also today cited the historic investments in Montana's water infrastructure made through the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*, noting Montana as one of the fastest states at distributing such funds to critical-need projects.

Tester today also questioned Jackson on the EPA's progress completing an ongoing risk-assessment study in Libby.

The EPA declared a [public health emergency in Libby](#) last year. Jackson promised an update on the study as soon as possible.