



Sustainability and Recycling

Water Conservation in Helena: Easy Ways to Make a Difference

August in Montana brings those long, hot, dry days, and let's be honest, we all want to keep our lawns looking lush and green! But this is also when our precious water resources can dwindle, making conservation more crucial than ever.

Where Does Our Water Come From?

Our water journey begins high in the mountains, flowing down to us as snow melt. The Ten Mile Water Treatment Plant, Helena's primary drinking water source, collects the water it treats from headwater streams in the Ten Mile Watershed and uses purely gravity to serve Helena's potable water needs. This gravity-fed system from Rimini is the most cost-effective way for the City to get water to your tap.

However, if this vital source runs low, as it does every summer when people water their lawns, city staff may have to also use the Missouri River Treatment Plant as a supplemental source to meet demand. While it ensures we still have water, it's a far more expensive process because that water must be pumped uphill to fill our distribution system and water tanks. Want to dive deeper and see some videos about our water system? Head over to [Helenamt.gov/drinking-water/](https://helenamt.gov/drinking-water/)!

Ready to Be a Water-Saving Superhero? Here's How You Can Help!



Silence the Drips! That constant drip, drip, drip from your sink, bathtub, or even an outdoor faucet might seem small, but those leaks can waste a surprising amount of water. Just 10 drips per minute can send a gallon of water down the drain every single day – that's 30 gallons a month! Since you're paying for every drop, fixing those leaks saves both water and cash!



Keep Your Lawn Hydrated, Not Evaporated! When it's time to water your lawn, think "cooler is better." Aim for the morning hours or later in the evening when temperatures drop. This simple trick dramatically reduces evaporation, meaning more water gets to your grass and less disappears into thin air.



Smart Lawn Care for a Lush Look! Your lawn doesn't need a daily drenching. Watering ½" to 1" three times a week is usually all it takes to keep your grass happy and healthy. And here's a pro-tip: avoid over-mowing, as this can stress your lawn. Plus, leaving your grass clippings on the lawn acts as a natural mulch, keeping the soil damp and reducing the need for frequent watering.



Water Your Lawn, Not the Pavement! We've all seen it – sprinklers watering sidewalks and streets. Let's make sure our sprinklers are aimed precisely at our lawns. If you notice water running off onto paved areas, try watering for a shorter duration, allowing the water to soak into the ground where it's needed.



Embrace Xeriscaping! For a truly water-wise yard, consider xeriscaping! Check out our June article for all the details, but it's essentially about choosing grasses, shrubs, and trees that thrive with minimal watering. You can also incorporate other landscaping materials like gravel instead of large expanses of grass.



Turn Off the Tap! This one's easy! Whether you're brushing your teeth or washing your car, resist the urge to let the water run continuously. Turning off the faucet until you need the water can save a significant amount.

City of Helena water usage comparison in millions of gallons, May-June 2025. Differences between treatment plant outputs are typically due to maintenance or the need to utilize additional water sources as natural water flow fluctuates throughout the year.

	Ten Mile	Eureka	Missouri River	Monthly Total	Peak Day Demand	Average Day
May	156	19.2	9	192	9	6.2
June	170.7	26.7	79.5	276.9	9.6	9.2
July	128.1	20	176.1	324.2	11.8	10.5

Join us for the Lake Helena Watershed Festival and visit us at the Farmer's Market



Lake Helena Watershed Festival

Join us for a fun and educational day celebrating the beauty and importance of the Lake Helena Watershed!

When: Friday, August 23rd, 2025

Time: 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Where: Women's Park, Helena

Get ready for:

- Interactive exhibits and activities
- Educational booths about watershed health
- Family-friendly fun
- Opportunities to learn how you can help protect our local water resources



This free event is open to everyone! Bring your family and friends to learn more about the vital role the Lake Helena Watershed plays in our community and how we can all contribute to its well-being. Let's protect our precious water together!

Looking for more? Join the City of Helena and Lewis & Clark County at the Farmer's Market!

Look for their booth at the corner of Fuller and Neill Avenues, where you can meet with staff, learn about what's happening in Helena and get your questions answered!

Schedule:	August 9:	City Transfer Station and Permits
	August 16:	City Public Works, Storm Water
	August 23:	City Public Works, Sustainability and Recycling
	September 6:	County Public Works, Noxious Weeds
	September 20:	City Public Works, Sustainability and Recycling
	October 11:	City and County Public Works, Composting

Helena Recycling: June 2024 vs. 2025



	All numbers are in tons	June 2024	June 2025
Aluminum/Tin/Glass/Plastics		26.3	38.5
Paper		15.1	3.8
E-Waste		0	0
Scrap Metal		45.7	74.8
Cardboard		85.7	88.7
Auto Batteries		2.7	2.3
Lithium Batteries		0	0
Oil/Antifreeze		9.9	.9
Grass/Leaves/Wood Chips/Bio-Solids/X-mas Trees/Food		260.4	232.6

The Journey of Recycling in Helena: Where Does it All Go?

Have you ever wondered what happens to your recycling after it leaves your curb or drop-off location? The journey of a recycled item is a complex one, and understanding its path can help ensure your efforts make a real difference!

The first step for most of Helena's recyclables is a local processing center. The City partners with companies like Helena Recycling and Pacific Steel & Recycling to handle the materials collected from our curbside program and community drop-sites. Here, recyclables are sorted, baled, and prepared for their next destination.



Cardboard: Corrugated cardboard is a significant commodity in Helena, with hundreds of tons being diverted from the landfill every year. After collection, the cardboard is baled and processed. By breaking down your boxes before recycling, you help make this part of the process more efficient!



Plastics #1 & #2: These plastics are processed and baled by Helena Recycling. They are then sold to markets where they can be turned into new products like bottles, food trays, and even carpet.



Aluminum and steel cans: These metals are collected and then sent to processors like Pacific Steel & Recycling, which purchases and recycles a wide variety of scrap metals. Often, this material is sold back to U.S. steel mills, keeping the product within the country.



Glass: Currently, glass goes to Momentum Recycling in Salt Lake City, where it is pulverized and used to make products like insulation and fiberglass. In exciting news, the City is investing in a glass crusher, set to arrive later this year, which will allow the glass to stay local! The City will provide crushed glass by the ton to the local cement factory, which will mean less mining for the company.

At the Transfer Station, Helena also offers specialized recycling for materials not accepted at drop-sites or curbside pickup.

Scrap Metal: Various types of scrap metal are accepted at the Transfer Station, then processed by Pacific Steel & Recycling

Lithium Batteries: Lithium batteries are collected, taped, put into barrels, and shipped off to be recycled. Lithium batteries are a significant fire hazard, so recycling helps keep the landfill and garbage trucks fire-free!

Green Waste: Tree trimmings and stumps get chipped, then mixed with grass clippings, leaves, and bio-solids from the wastewater treatment plant to create a garden-grade compost out at the landfill. This compost is then available for purchase!

Electronics (E-Waste): Specialized recycling is needed for electronics. A local company provides services for electronics recycling and data destruction to ensure old devices are handled responsibly. However, TVs, computer monitors and printers are not recyclable.

A significant challenge in recycling is contamination. If recyclable materials are mixed with trash or are not clean and dry, the entire load can be compromised and sent to the landfill. This is why it's crucial to follow recycling guidelines, such as rinsing containers and flattening cardboard boxes!

The journey of your recyclables from your home to a new product highlights the importance of proper sorting and cleaning. By understanding where these materials go, we can all contribute to a more sustainable Helena.

Transfer Station Hours

Open daily, 8 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.

Vehicles must be unloaded and out of the facility by 4:30 p.m.