

City of Belt
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<https://cityofbelt.org/>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: April 14, 2025

Contact: James M. Olson, Mayor & Floodplain Administrator

City of Belt Removed from FEMA National Flood Insurance Program Probation & the City of Belt is Now Compliant with FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program.

Belt, Mont.— On March 14, 2025, FEMA notified the City of Belt, that it is no longer on probation and is now in good standing with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Traci Sears, Montana Department of Natural Resources NFIP Coordinator, wants to recognize that was largely due the hard work and collaboration of several individuals and groups including the leadership of the City of Belt, FEMA, MT DNRC Floodplain, and Great West Engineering.

Sears said, "Belt's leadership was willing to tackle the issues head on. Compliance, enforcement, and permitting are the hardest parts of a floodplain program and Belt is to be commended for its willingness to step up and administer its program."

She said the City of Belt sent out letters to educate property owners about floodplain and permitting requirements. "It's not easy to send a letter to a neighbor about compliance when you are a floodplain administrator, but if you send it from an education and outreach standpoint, property owners understand what they can and can't build in the floodplain. At the very least, they can learn how to build it, so a structure is compliant with the regulations". This can go a long way in avoiding future compliance problems or flood damage later.

FEMA first warned the City of several program deficiencies in 2022, however Belt struggled to find the resources to address the issues and on Jan. 27, 2023, FEMA officially placed Belt on probation due its failure to administer its local floodplain program.

DNRC Floodplain program worked closely with the City of Belt's Mayor, Jim Olson, throughout 2024. Last fall Belt took major steps by hiring a floodplain consultant to help them. The City Aldermen also participated in floodplain training and a floodplain committee was organized. Local citizen, Rolf Johnson, stepped up to lead the floodplain committee and facilitate communication between property owners and FEMA on addressing the compliance issues. He also sent weekly reports about Belt's Corrective Action Plan. When asked about FEMA's notice, Rolf said, "I am thrilled & would like to thank the citizens of Belt. It's a lot of work so getting off probation is huge."

According to FEMA's guidelines, probation mandates flood insurance policy holders pay an extra \$50 for policy premiums, which they will no longer have to do now that Belt is off probation. Flood insurance and disaster programs are available to Belt's property owners because the City participates and is in good standing with the National Flood Insurance Program.

Sears said, "this is just a positive step in the right direction". The City must continue to enforce its floodplain rules and regulations, follow its adopted floodplain ordinance, and educate its property owners located in the regulatory floodplain about the need for approval and permitting prior to projects being started. Rolf said most of the property owners want to fix their compliance problems, it's just a matter of helping them understand what is needed.

For more information on the City of Belt's participation in the NFIP program visit the City of Belt's website at: <https://cityofbelt.org/City-of-Belt-Permits/>

Additional information is located on the State of Montana Floodplain website, mtfloodplain.mt.gov Contact Traci Sears, Montana National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Coordinator at 406-444-6654; EMAIL or via email: tsears@mt.gov.