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MONTANA LABOR MARKET

Monthly Review of
EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK, LABOR SUPPLY, LABOR DEMAND, CURRENT EMPLOYMENT

MONTANA STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE

Division of Unemployment Compensation Commission of Montana

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FL-109

APRIL 15, 1952

Estimates of Employment Show 600 Seasonal Gain

Estimates of industrial employment in Montana as of March 15 show a seasonal gain of 600 in total number of wage earners over the figure for the previous month and a decline of 200 from March 15, 1951. The figures are: 142,800 in March, 142,200 in February, and 143,000 a year ago, and are exclusive of agricultural labor. Similar employment two years ago, in March, 1950, was 135,200.

Slightly Below Year Ago

Increases over the employment a year ago are noted in transportation and utilities, 300; finance and real estate, 200; industrial services, 200; and government employment, 200. Offsetting decreases occurred in manufacturing, 400; mining, 100; contract construction, 300; and wholesale and retail trade, 300.

Building Lethargy a Factor

The manufacturing employment decrease in the year period is traceable to the lumber and timber industry and to stone and clay processing, both of which are influenced by the lethargy which has come over the residential and commercial building program. The same factor shows up in employment by building contractors, where a loss of 500 is indicated, partly offset by an increase of 200 in employ of highway, bridge, powerline, and dam contractors. Mining employment decreased as underground workers took leave of the mines for the summer period, to engage in farming or other outdoor work. Replacements are being recruited on a continuing basis.

Trade Shows Slight Decline

Wholesale trade made an actual gain of 200 from its year ago level, which in turn was swept away by a decline of 500 in retail trade. This arose in the miscellaneous retail establishments, including drug stores, sport shops, and souvenir stands which have been consistently below the year ago figures for the last ten months.

Upward Trend from February

The gains from February employment were principally seasonal and occurred in transportation, finance, trade, service, and government. No change is shown for manufacturing and contract construction, and a decrease of 200 appears in metal mining. The construction industry showed a 300 decrease in building employment against a 300 increase in other than building, which includes such projects as Hungry Horse and Canyon Ferry dams, and the highway construction program.

Earnings Rise in Durable Goods

Average weekly earnings in manufacture of durable goods were up 3 percent in February from the January level, the estimates show. A slight rise in average hourly earnings and concurrent increase in average

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SEASONAL EMPLOYMENT STIRS FROM WINTER LETHARGY AS OUTDOOR JOBS ARE RESUMED

Montana's labor market was thawing out from the winter interruption to outside employment as March drew to a close. Hiring during the month was at an accelerated pace, in keeping with the traditional habits induced by weather conditions, and the labor market was stirring with new registrations, return of workers who had wintered in other states, and the organization or re-organization of crews for the spring and summer pressure of work activities.

Labor Shortage Threat Appears Less Acute

Statistics for the period are necessarily tardy in reflecting the full extent of the back-to-work movement. On a comparative basis with previous years, however, the picture can tend to discount the threat of labor shortage which seemed apparent a month ago. The be studied with reasonable assurance of validity. Inferences to be drawn, in summary, change is only in matter of degree, as it still appears evident that the present pool of unemployed labor in the state will be absorbed, insofar as it is qualified for offered jobs, long before the summer peak of employment is reached.

Jobseeker List Shrinks by 1,000

The labor supply at the end of March, as represented in active jobseekers listed at offices of the state employment service, stood at 9,400, about 1,000 short of the level a month earlier and 1,400 below the figure for a year ago. It is significant that the deficiency from last year's figures is 600 less this month than it was a month ago. Compared with 1950 the spread is much greater. March, 1952, is 7,000 below the labor supply indicated in March, 1950; while the February figures showed a shrinkage of 8,500 from February, 1950.

Active Employment Demand in April

Employment outlook in early April is marked by the demand already in sight for construction of dams, bridges, highways and power facilities, for maintenance of rail lines, for forest and park maintenance and improvement, for farming and livestock jobs, and for the wholesale and retail trade, service industries and transportation facilities in response to expanded purchasing power and the influx of recreational and vacational visitors.

Shortage of Miners Continues

No pronounced labor shortages are reported from area labor markets in the state, other than the long-standing demand for hard-rock miners in the metal mining districts. Most emphatic decrease during March, in number of jobseekers, occurred at Missoula, Livingston, Great Falls, and Helena. All these points are important railroad centers. The reverse of the picture shows increases in the supply of jobseekers at Billings, Kalispell, Libby, Polson, Cut Bank, and Hamilton, in most of which areas the spring break-up of roads has idled logging and lumbering crews.

Job Placements Show Season Trend

Job placements by the employment service in March numbered 2,587, an increase of more than 500 from March, 1951, another

indication of the fluidity of the labor market during the month. The seasonal trend is reflected in the increase of 750 job placements over February. Principal industrial demands during the month just closed came from trade, construction, mining, service industries, and manufacturing while in agriculture the demand arose from general farms and livestock enterprises, with grain and beef farms only beginning to show the volume that develops as the season advances.

Pouring Cement at Hungry Horse

Pouring of cement began April 2 at Hungry Horse dam on the Flathead river near Kalispell on a round the clock basis. Skeleton crews for each of three shifts had been mustered during March and are being filled in as the season advances and full scale construction approaches. About 500 re-hires occurred during March, bringing the project force to around 1,250 in early April. This is steadily expanding, largely through call-back of former employees. Completion of the main body of cement work is expected by late fall of this year.

Road construction around the rim of the reservoir, and final steps in clearing the reservoir site, await melting of snow and ice. These phases of the program will add 300 or more workers to the force, probably late in April or in May. Power house construction and installation of generators will provide another source of increased employment.

Canyon Ferry Doubles Crew in March

Construction employment at Canyon Ferry dam near Helena about doubled to reach the 300 level during March and is continuing to expand in April, with prospect that the seasonal maximum of 500 to 600 will be reached by late May. Building of forms and placing cement are the key activities, and will continue to be so through the summer. Preliminaries for power house units and placing of power equipment will add openings through the season. A small clearing force is required on the reservoir area.

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Estimates of Employment Show 600 Seasonal Gain

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weekly hours produced the gain in weekly paycheck. Other industries declined on a minor scale in average hours worked, producing weekly paychecks averaging moderately below those of the previous month.

On basis of annual comparison the February 1952 figures are all substantially above those of February 1951. The difference arises principally from increase in average hourly earnings and reflects the changes in pay scale which have occurred in most industries during the period. Changes in average number of hours worked in February last from those of February a year ago were mostly downward but very minor in extent.

Along the Hiring Line ---

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March, idling another 30 to 40 workers. The same weather and road conditions which interfered with pulpwood on a normal, seasonal, pattern also delayed resumption of highway construction, railroad maintenance, street paving, and building a new hospital and additions to local packing plant. No field work on farms yet, some hiring in expectation of April start.

MALTA — (122 jobseekers; 92 men, 30 women) Seven outfits are equipping drilling crews for oil exploration in this area, a new labor demand this season. High school students are seeking summer employment. Farmers await spring weather but are placing orders in advance for workers.

MILES CITY, Baker, Broadus, Ekalaka, Jordan, Terry — (139 jobseekers; 106 men, 33 women; 27 men, 6 women over 50) Labor supply dwindling under impact of hiring for construction, farm, and retail sales. Two street paving jobs, new water mains, some residence and small business blocks expected to drain the labor market in April. Extra gangs for the railroads will be organizing at the same time. Oil exploration continues active, with increasing dependence upon local labor supply.

MISSOULA, Arlee, Drummond, Superior — (817 jobseekers; 620 men, 197 women) Construction is expanding along seasonal pattern. Two buildings at university have crew of 35, power line construction is using 200, match plant at Superior will break ground shortly, road reconstruction continues with full crews. Lumbering is in its usual spring slump while roads and forests shed winter garb. Hiring for farm needs is just beginning.

POLSON — (431 jobseekers; 388 men, 43 women) Labor supply is about 100 above year ago, about same number of Indians are in files, many expecting work on additional power unit at the dam, construction for which may not start until fall. Soft roads and melting snow has halted logging operations, will resume in May. Street surfacing expected also at that time.

SHELBY, Chester, Conrad — (142 jobseekers; 119 men, 23 women) Unfavorable weather kept outdoor work at a standstill until March 15. Two construction projects have resumed, stimulating demand for carpenters and building labor. Highway construction on two jobs starts soon, followed by another in May. Labor supply adequate into May. Farm demand just beginning to be felt, will be heavier through April.

Sidney — (297 jobseekers; 277 men, 20 women) Farm orders for help are increasing.

ESTIMATED EMPLOYMENT IN NON-AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES IN MONTANA (1)

(Produced in co-operation with United States Bureau of Labor Statistics)

INDUSTRY	EMPLOYMENT			Net Change	
	Mar. 1952 (2)	Feb. 1952 (3)	Mar. 1951	Feb. 52 to Mar. 52	Mar. 51 to Mar. 52
NONAGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES.....	142,800	142,200	143,000	600	-200
Manufacturing	16,400	16,400	16,800	0	-400
Durable goods	9,400	9,500	9,900	-100	-500
Lumber and timber products	5,000	5,100	5,200	-100	-200
Primary metals	3,600	3,700	3,700	-100	-100
Other (4)	800	700	1,000	100	-200
Nondurable goods	7,000	6,900	6,900	100	100
Food and kindred products	3,900	3,800	3,800	100	100
Printing and publishing	1,600	1,600	1,500	0	100
Other (5)	1,500	1,500	1,600	0	-100
Mining	10,900	11,100	11,000	-200	-100
Metal mining	8,500	8,700	8,600	-200	-100
Bituminous and soft coal mining	800	800	800	0	0
Petroleum-natural gas production	1,100	1,100	1,100	0	0
Quarrying and nonmetallic mining	500	500	500	0	0
Contract construction	6,900	6,900	7,200	0	-300
Contractors, building construction	2,200	2,500	2,700	-300	-500
Contractors, other than building	2,100	1,800	1,900	300	200
Contractors, special trade	2,600	2,600	2,600	0	0
Transportation and utilities	22,300	22,200	22,000	100	300
Interstate railroads	13,900	13,800	13,800	100	100
Transportation except railroads	3,200	3,200	3,300	0	-100
Utilities including communication	5,200	5,200	4,900	0	300
Trade	35,400	35,300	35,700	100	-300
Wholesale trade	7,800	7,900	7,600	-100	200
Retail trade	27,600	27,400	28,100	200	-500
General merchandise and apparel	5,800	5,600	5,700	200	100
Food stores	4,100	4,100	4,000	0	100
Eating and drinking establishments..	7,300	7,400	7,300	-100	0
Automotive and filling stations	4,900	4,900	4,800	0	100
Retail trade not elsewhere classified..	5,500	5,400	6,300	100	-800
Finance, insurance and real estate	4,200	4,200	4,000	0	200
Services and miscellaneous	18,800	18,500	18,600	300	200
Hotels, rooming houses, camps, etc.	2,800	2,700	2,500	100	300
Personal services	2,400	2,400	2,400	0	0
Other (6)	13,600	13,400	13,700	200	-100
Government	27,900	27,600	27,700	300	200
Great Falls Area (Cascade County)	13,800	13,700	13,900	200	-100
Selected Industries					
Manufacturing	2,800	2,700	2,800	100	0
Transportation and utilities	2,400	2,400	2,400	0	0
Trade	5,500	5,500	5,600	0	-100
Services and miscellaneous (7)	3,100	3,100	3,100	0	0

(1) Estimates include all full and part-time wage and salary workers who worked or received pay during the pay period ending nearest the 15th of the month. Proprietors, firm members, personnel of the armed forces, domestic servants, and self-employed persons are excluded.

(2) Preliminary estimates based on return from sample of 629 selected Montana establishments.

(3) Figures previously released have been revised on returns from 932 such establishments.

(4) Includes fabricated metal products, machinery except electrical, furniture, stone and clay products.

(5) Includes apparel, chemicals, petroleum, and miscellaneous manufacturing products.

(6) Includes commercial trade schools, auto repair services and garages, miscellaneous repair services and hand trades, motion pictures, amusements and recreation, medical and health, law offices and professional services, nonprofit membership organizations and business not otherwise classified.

(7) Same as (6) above, also includes finance, insurance, real estate and mining.

THOMPSON FALLS, Hot Springs—(188 jobseekers; 169 men, 19 women) Decrease of 36 from month ago and 58 from year ago, despite seasonal halt in logging due to soft roads and snow conditions in the timber. Construction demands will mount steadily through April, and logging should resume about the same time. Present labor supply sufficient until May.

WOLF POINT, Plentywood, Scobey — (125 jobseekers; 104 men, 21 women) Construction hiring will begin in early April, shortage of building trades in prospect. Unskilled labor supply ample until May. Farm hiring already under way, few transients appearing. Demand outruns supply of auto mechanics, truck drivers, stenographers, and women for cafe and restaurant work.

COMPARISON OF BASIC LABOR MARKET TRANSACTIONS IN MARCH 1952 AND MARCH 1951

Employment Service Office	New Job Applicants				Jobseekers in File				Job Placements				Employer Visits		Job Openings		U. I. Claims Week 4-5	
	Mar. 1952		Mar. 1951		Mar. 1952		Mar. 1951		Mar. 1952		Mar. 1951		1952	1951	1952	1951	1952	1951
	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.	Tot.	Vet.						
Anaconda.....	72	19	89	30	127	23	166	39	42	8	60	27	40	43	51	88	76	104
Billings.....	438	124	391	131	923	219	1,320	363	285	93	188	63	291	164	268	214	488	712
Bozeman.....	120	56	171	58	232	74	267	58	182	62	171	56	140	112	163	149	130	132
Butte.....	253	24	187	15	505	43	505	42	204	37	279	90	223	170	353	418	378	372
Cut Bank.....	32	17	49	16	192	49	198	48	26	19	24	7	38	44	29	23	131	131
Dillon.....	48	9	80	24	72	14	124	31	76	35	46	16	60	26	26	19	39	39
Forsyth.....	42	18	37	12	60	18	95	22	31	16	21	9	33	39	21	21	53	39
Fort Benton.....	22	8	20	7	27	9	43	10	21	11	22	13	41	43	11	10	16	29
Glasgow.....	87	21	119	33	181	47	377	91	88	39	45	16	84	53	75	81	83	117
Glendive.....	106	34	36	9	25	4	76	12	69	29	18	9	72	39	83	44	25	42
Great Falls.....	228	61	223	70	999	265	860	314	238	95	169	69	154	113	191	208	598	620
Hamilton.....	22	8	28	5	407	113	488	111	31	8	62	23	98	105	14	40	178	226
Havre.....	66	16	50	15	186	47	317	103	86	41	78	38	113	78	98	79	105	134
Helena.....	322	163	141	54	536	160	561	176	328	133	235	109	92	122	288	276	276	254
Kalispell.....	243	55	242	74	1,883	552	1,966	624	103	45	113	46	135	134	150	172	985	1,200
Lewistown.....	136	29	39	9	214	47	287	76	82	30	45	10	125	56	63	33	127	146
Libby.....	40	17	24	9	237	73	231	68	14	6	16	3	17	16	19	22	188	197
Livingston.....	133	21	143	30	325	66	331	77	116	30	111	31	90	71	84	84	150	118
Malta.....	32	8	27	7	122	28	182	36	33	13	18	8	58	48	55	15	53	94
Miles City.....	147	46	77	31	139	38	217	72	131	46	48	24	77	61	96	50	100	160
Missoula.....	131	46	125	50	817	240	1,005	267	152	39	113	30	112	140	136	81	540	556
Polson.....	53	10	34	2	431	121	338	80	24	5	16	4	23	42	26	26	256	227
Shelby.....	44	18	25	1	142	44	185	46	52	20	51	20	85	79	42	93	71	69
Sidney.....	84	20	41	16	297	62	266	58	82	16	66	5	58	87	68	41	129	171
Thomp. Falls.....	17	5	26	9	188	27	246	60	41	19	25	5	26	24	45	32	143	188
Wolf Point.....	32	10	41	10	125	37	193	65	50	9	30	10	45	26	49	29	97	128
*Tchr. Plcmt.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	645	275	662	275	6	3	3	1	6	8	88	54	.....	.....
TOTALS.....	2,950	863	2,465	727	9,392	2,420	10,844	2,949	2,587	904	2,070	741	2,330	1,935	2,504	2,348	5,415	6,205

*Not included in totals.

AVERAGE HOURS AND EARNINGS IN SELECTED MONTANA INDUSTRIES

(Produced in co-operation with United States Bureau of Labor Statistics)
(Hours and earnings data exclude administrative and salaried personnel)

INDUSTRY	Average Weekly Earnings			Average Weekly Hours			Average Hourly Earnings		
	Feb. 1952	Jan. 1952	Feb. 1951	Feb. 1952	Jan. 1952	Feb. 1951	Feb. 1952	Jan. 1952	Feb. 1951
All Manufacturing	\$79.45	\$78.55	\$74.80	43.0	42.9	43.7	\$1.85	\$1.83	\$1.71
Durable goods	84.10	81.50	78.94	44.7	43.9	45.3	1.88	1.86	1.74
Primary metals	81.29	82.68	73.94	44.2	44.8	44.5	1.84	1.84	1.66
Nondurable goods	71.56	73.48	67.47	40.1	41.2	40.9	1.78	1.78	1.65
Food and kindred products	59.41	63.36	56.02	39.7	42.0	41.3	1.50	1.51	1.36
All Mining	84.88	87.38	78.44	42.3	43.2	42.3	2.01	2.03	1.85
Metal mining	83.12	87.66	75.58	42.9	44.7	42.6	1.94	1.96	1.77
Transportation and Utilities (except railrds.)	68.67	70.32	65.91	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Transportation (except railrds.)	79.31	79.66	75.08
Utilities and communication	61.08	63.40	58.61	39.1	40.5	38.3	1.56	1.57	1.53

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