Independent Record

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MONTANA LOTTERY

MILLIONAIRE POSTPONED



LARRY MAYER, BILLINGS GAZETTE

Lottery ticket customers form a line on Grand Avenue outside a gas station as Montana Millionaire ticket terminals froze due to high sales demand state-wide on Sunday, Nov. 1.

Thousands wait for hours before system crashes; Lottery says it will set new date

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The Montana Lottery announced around 11 a.m. that it is postponing Montana Millionaire.

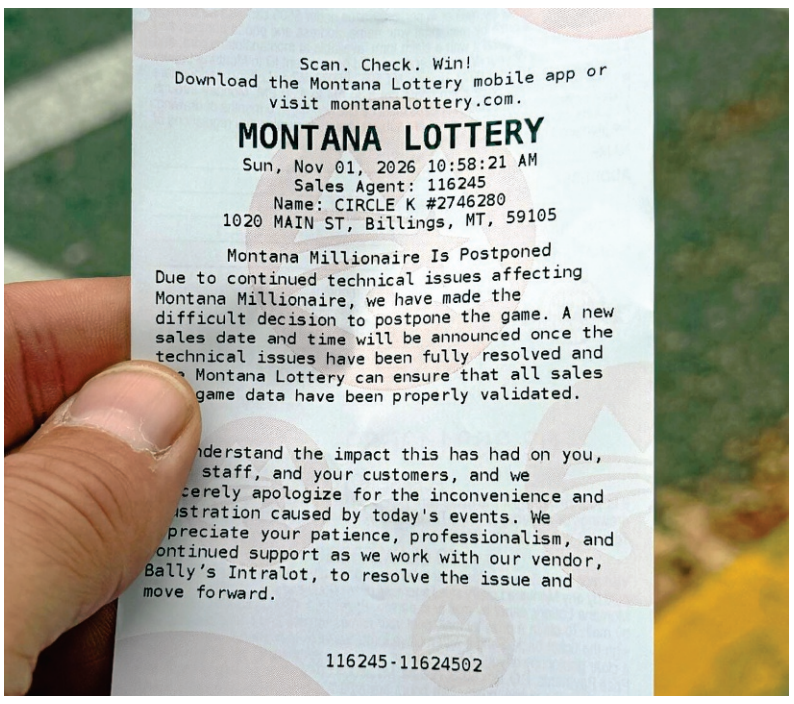
In a notice handed out to customers and posted to social media, the lottery said it will announce a new sales time and date once technical issues have been resolved.

"We understand the impact this has had on our players and sales agents and we sincerely apologize for the inconvenience and frustration caused by today's events. We appreciate your patience as we work with our vendor, Bally's Intralot, to resolve the issue and move forward," the lottery said.

In another update, the lottery said purchased tickets remain valid and players can redeem their instant wins.

"Players that received Montana Millionaire tickets need to hold

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MIKE BROWNLEE, BILLINGS GAZETTE

A notice handed out to customers about the postponement of Montana Millionaire.

LINCOLN COUNTY

2 dead in Eureka shooting, including deputy

Kalispell man, 50, taken into custody

MISSOULIAN STAFF

A suspect is in custody after killing a Lincoln County sheriff's deputy who responded a disturbance call on Friday night in Eureka, where a woman was found dead with gunshot wounds.

In a news release, the department identified the victims as Deputy Ryan Terpsma, 28, and Merrisa Walker, 46. A suspect, Matthew David Dye, a 50-year-old Kalispell man, is in custody and will be charged, the release said.

According to the release, after 8 p.m. on Friday law enforcement was called for a disturbance at 118 Lone Pine Trail. After arriving, Dye allegedly opened fire, killing Deputy Terpsma and wounding a Eureka police officer, whose injuries are not life-threatening. Dye then fled the scene with a 7-year-old girl, the release said.

Flathead County sheriff's deputies pursued Dye, who fired on and disabled two patrol cars, the release said. Law enforcement set up a roadblock on Highway 93 where Dye stopped and surrendered.

After arresting him, officials found Walker at the 118 Lone Pine Trail, as well as an injured juvenile female who was treated and released.

"It has been trying times in Lincoln County during the last year," the release said. "We are all deeply affected by the loss of Deputy Terpsma and know we can count on our community to support the Sheriff's Office and each other as we grieve the loss of this fine young man."

Dye will have an initial hearing in Lincoln County Justice Court next week, the release said.

The Flathead County Sheriff's Office said its deputies involved have been placed on administrative leave per department policy, according to a social media post. The state Department of Justice Division of Criminal Investigation is the lead agency on the case.

Native grasslands are disappearing in Montana

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Imagine waking up one day and Yellowstone National Park had been plowed under.

That's close to the amount of grasslands lost in the United States between 2020 and 2024 — 3,281 square miles, or 2.1 million acres. Roughly half that, 1,875 square miles (1.2 million acres) were lost just in the Great Plains, according to estimates by the World Wildlife Fund.

This is not to say farmers are plowing under treasured national resources like Yellowstone, it's simply a way to understand the amount of native grassland loss. Like the nation's first national park, however, grasslands are home to a variety of wildlife and native vegetation.

The Northern Great Plains cover more than 281,000 square miles (180 million acres) across five states and two Canadian provinces, providing habitat for more than 1,595 species of plants and 500 species of wildlife.

Plowprint report

The amount of grassland loss is contained in the World Wildlife Fund's 2026 Plowprint report, a 12-page document that this year included Canada and Mexico in its estimates of grasslands converted to row crop agriculture.

According to Plowprint, most of the conversion to crops in the United States is for corn and soybeans, while wheat is tops in Canada.

The big takeaway is uncomfortable: 80% of the grasslands in North America are gone.

This level of loss means less native rangeland to stabilize soil, reduce erosion, store and sequester carbon, improve water filtration and aquifer storage and provide wildlife habitat, some of the benefits noted on the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture's website.

"In my opinion, one of the most compelling aspects of WWF's 2026 Plowprint Report is the graph that shows the amount of cropland remaining constant but grassland loss is increasing," Catherine Wightman, coordinator of the Northern Great Plains Joint Venture, wrote in an email.

"So, while we continue to lose grass, it doesn't seem that we are actually gaining any food production land through farming," she added. "My sense is this is due to loss of farmland to development in the Midwest, which is pushing new acres of cropland further west to less productive soils. There likely are some policy drivers here too."

Local perspective

Alexis Bonogofsky, a Billings native and vice president of the World Wildlife Fund's Great Plains Program, said the report helps her group and other organizations track the amount of grassland loss — and what

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CHRISTOPHER BOYER, KESTREL AERIAL

The 2026 Plowprint is the first to capture grasslands running from the Prairie Provinces in Canada to the Chihuahuan Desert.