

**Wastewater Solutions Forum
Working Group
BSW&S Conference Room
January 28, 2009**

Minutes

In attendance: Scott Bosse, Mike DuCuennois, Ron Edwards, Kristin Gardner, Marne Hayes, Jon Holtzman, James Taylor: Guest: (by phone) Ray Armstrong, HKM Engineering.

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:05. The minutes of December 3 were motioned by Kristin Gardner, seconded by Ron Edwards and approved. (**Next meeting: Wednesday, March 4, BSW&S Conference Room**)
2. Jon Holtzman reviewed e-mail comments from Pete Schade, DEQ, which provided informal feedback on Forum activities. Pete commented on snowmaking from effluent and TMDLs. His reaction to snowmaking was that there was nothing in state law prohibiting snowmaking however he saw some “high technical hurdles” to be cleared if permitting was to be possible. Relating to TMDLs he said there seemed to be a “large wastewater-related nitrate load being added to the West Fork/Middle Fork through the golf course, presumably from effluent being applied ...” He suggested it may be caused by a “management” problem. He said it was not yet known how much of the problem related to septic migration or upstream land-application but DEQ was trying to make a determination as part of its current TMDL study.

Jon was asked to forward Pete a copy of Jecyn Bremer’s literature review, **Investigating the Feasibility of Using Treated Wastewater for Snowmaking at North American Ski Areas.** Jon also committed to reviewing Pete’s comments with representatives of Big Sky Resort.

3. Ray Armstrong reported a final copy of the engineering report on a septic collection system along U.S.191 has been forwarded to DEQ for review and comment. A previous agreement to collect comparative user fee, connection and bond obligation cost data from other resort areas and nearby communities has not yet been completed, but is in the works. Responsibility for this belongs to Ray and Ron Edwards.
4. Scott Bosse provided all attendees with a copy of Jecyn Bremer’s snowmaking report. Bremer was not able to be at this meeting but Scott will ask her to attend the March 4 session. Scott also provided the Forum with the forms required to submit requests for federal funding under the economic stimulus program.

5. Two agenda items – review of the draft information brochure and public outreach review and assignments – were shelved following discussion of the next steps to be taken in pursuing solutions to handling wastewater.

Ron Edwards, in response to a question, said he doubted the Big Sky Water and Sewer Board would accept additional areas into the District unless a way to deal with increased wastewater flows was found. He noted the existing plant was designed to treat and manage projected wastewater flows for build out development within existing District boundaries. Regardless of the plant capacity to treat additional volumes, **current winter storage capacities will become a limiting factor.**

Without additional management/disposal options the District was laying itself open to being sued if it used up its capacity for customers not now part of the service area.

The engineering study considered seven alternatives for disposal/reuse. The existing golf courses – Big Sky and the Yellowstone Club – have capacity to handle already established requirements for approximately 17 years. Beyond that, and to handle management requirements for an expanded district, new arrangements will be needed. HKM recommends snowmaking from effluent as the first alternative. A number of ski resort communities in the US currently use the practice.

In the ensuing discussion Forum members decided moving ahead with communication encouraging canyon residents to consider and support central sewage collection would be premature. Without a way to manage the wastewater generated it was feared the project would be a non-starter.

The group decided to refocus its effort toward building acceptance by the state of snowmaking with effluent.

Scott Bosse urged involving state political leadership in the discussion and James Taylor agreed (Scott wanted it officially noted in the minutes James had agreed with him.) Scott suggested that at the appropriate time the Governor, Senator Baucus and the head of DEQ be invited to attend a public meeting in Big Sky to review the issue and discuss solutions.

Jon Holtzman pointed out the study identified potential and existing health threats associated with the rapid development of the canyon and said they should be an important justification for a central collection system. The study noted the existence of a large number of septic system drainfields in proximity to a large number of drinking water wells. It pointed to 18 reports of coliform contamination of public drinking water in the past five years and said since

private wells were not tested frequently there were undoubtedly a number of instances of contamination of residential water as well. He suggested assuring the canyon community be made aware of the threat.

Rather than submitting a full fledged proposal to the state to proceed with central collection James Taylor suggested an interim step of submitting a plan to the DEQ to test snowmaking with effluent. Mike DuCuennois volunteered to work with the BSW&S District to establish a site for a test at the Yellowstone Club. Jon Holtzman urged involving DEQ in the design and review of any test to assure their questions would be addressed.

A path forward and timetable for submitting a plan will be discussed at the March 4 meeting.

Although there was agreement to refocus the group effort Scott Bosse recommended that communication steps were still needed to confirm we continued working the problem and to produce visible evidence for use with the state there was an issue to be addressed.

- a) Jon Holtzman will briefly sum up the Forum's present situation at the annual public meeting of the Blue Water Task Force February 19 at Ophir School. The BWTF will assure local media are invited to attend.
 - b) Jon will also draft an op-ed for possible placement in the Bozeman Chronicle reviewing the Forum's co-operative and pro-active approach to addressing potential future pollution associated with rapid growth.
6. James Taylor provided a restatement of the purpose of the Forum:
- a) provide for protecting the health of the Gallatin.
 - b) protect drinking water quality.
 - c) provide for sewage treatment and management at build out levels
 - d) preserve property rights
 - e) recycle and retain water within the watershed
 - f) develop the ability to measure compliance with public standards (through central collection and treatment)
 - g) establish a process to fix problems (by central processing)
7. The next meeting date will be set based on availability of attendees. (see note in red at the beginning of the minutes).
8. The meeting adjourned at noon.

