



## Fact Sheet – Gallatin Canyon Wastewater Upgrade Study

March 17, 2020

As Big Sky continues to grow, the Upper Gallatin Watershed will continue to be faced with new and complex challenges. The groundwater is being loaded with nutrients, the ground water supply will be tested, and surface water resources such as the Gallatin River will be in greater danger of contamination, increased temperature and decreased flows.

The study area extends from approximately the Bighorn Center south along the Gallatin river corridor to the Corral Bar. This study area encompasses the most developed area of the Gallatin Canyon and the area where most projected development can occur.

WGM Group and AE2S are working on options for wastewater treatment in the Canyon. This study examines the following:

- Nutrient loading from existing and future septic and small community systems compared to future centralized and decentralized options.
- Sewer collection system design for the Canyon
- Three options for wastewater treatment:
  - Canyon WRRF: This is also referred to as the “Go-it-alone” option, meaning the Canyon would operate its own treatment plant, reuse/disposal systems, and all associated infrastructure.
  - Conveyance to Big Sky WRRF: also referred to as the “Co- solution”. The Canyon District would operate its own collection system, but wastewater from the Canyon would be conveyed to the existing Big Sky County Water and Sewer District WRRF for treatment. Some treated water would be returned to the Canyon for disposal, including treated water that originated from the existing BSCWSD. The May 5<sup>th</sup> 1% Resort Tax voter request includes up to 12 million dollars to pay for the cost of conveyance to and from the Canyon.
  - Decentralized options: For areas where centralized treatment is not feasible, the engineers are evaluating de-centralized treatment alternatives.
- Initial cost estimates for the options, including annual operation, maintenance and replacement costs, and opportunities for funding. Estimates on connection fee and rate payer costs will be available by April.

The recommended centralized treatment options will result in approximately 99% less bacteria, 90% less nitrogen, and 90% less phosphorus entering Canyon Area groundwater, if the majority of Canyon residents connect to the sewer collection system. Decentralized options will significantly reduce these loads in areas where centralized treatment is not feasible.

### Stay Informed

Gallatin Canyon Wastewater Upgrade Project Information: [www.gallatinrivertaskforce.org/gallatin-canyon-study/](http://www.gallatinrivertaskforce.org/gallatin-canyon-study/)

Email list: [headwaters@gallatinrivertaskforce.org](mailto:headwaters@gallatinrivertaskforce.org)

1% for Infrastructure Information: <https://resorttax.org/about/1-for-infrastructure/>

## FAQs

### 1. How is a District formed?

A District can be formed by a petition from 100% of landowners within a proposed boundary or through a vote of residents within a boundary.

### 2. Can the service area expand after a District is formed?

Yes. Annexation can be accomplished by a petition of contiguous owners who would like to join or through a vote. The District board can accept or reject a petition or establish a vote, if needed. Forced annexation has extremely tight requirements and is not an objective of this District formation, nor is it expected to be economical or enforceable.

### 3. What are the advantages of forming a District?

Infrastructure funds from both 1% and 3% Resort Tax provisions are open to Water and Sewer Districts. Other funds from state and federal infrastructure funding sources are also only available to Districts. It also moves liability from individual property owners to the District.

### 4. Could the Canyon simply join the existing Big Sky County Water and Sewer District by annexation?

While it is possible, it would require a vote of the existing District plus those in the Canyon. That is not considered feasible at this time.

### 5. What are likely treated water disposal options?

Groundwater infiltration of high-quality treated water (currently happening with relatively low-quality septic tank and small community system effluents) and irrigation are options available now. Snowmaking may be an additional option in the future. Highly treated wastewater is essential for using these options for disposal.

### 6. Is there any cap on growth in the Canyon area?

Water rights limit the total feasible growth in the Canyon. The Gallatin watershed is a closed basin and senior water rights holders are downstream. Growth in this area of the Canyon is likely capped at approximately three times the existing development.

More FAQs are available online at [www.gallatinrivertaskforce.org/gallatin-canyon-study/](http://www.gallatinrivertaskforce.org/gallatin-canyon-study/)

## Next Community Wastewater Information Session

- April 1: 5:30-7:00 pm. Streaming only due to COVID-19 precautions
- Join from your computer, tablet or smartphone: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/541221685>. You can also dial in using your phone. (For supported devices, tap a one-touch number below to join instantly.) United States: +1 (872) 240-3412  
- One-touch: <tel:+18722403412>, [541221685#](tel:+18722403412): Access Code: 541-221-685

