



Dear Gallatin County Planning Board,

On behalf of the Gallatin River Task Force (Task Force), I appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on the Future Land Use Map (FLUM). The mission of the Task Force is to partner with our greater community to lead conservation and inspire stewardship of the Gallatin River Watershed by focusing on ecological health, water supply, and wastewater management. The Gallatin River is a vital ecosystem that supports healthy trout fisheries, wildlife, recreation, and agriculture for downstream communities. These invaluable assets are threatened by significant challenges with water quality and quantity.

These challenges are the result of shifting climate patterns combined with increasing pressure from residential and visitor populations. We are witnessing reduced snowpack, earlier snowmelt, and lower warmer streamflows in the late summer and fall. These changes increase the frequency and intensity of droughts stressing a vulnerable ecosystem. In addition, the Upper Gallatin has grappled with widespread algal blooms in our rivers and streams. These blooms degrade water quality, threaten aquatic life, and disrupt recreational activities.

Therefore, we are extremely encouraged by the significant consideration of water in the FLUM, including:

1. The FLUM **discourages development in highly sensitive and high-risk areas**, including floodplains, channel migration zones, and ecologically significant areas.
2. The FLUM **connects open spaces**, driving growth towards existing infrastructure and making efficient use of land and water resources.
3. The FLUM **incentivizes growth to be connected to public water and sewer facilities**, reducing nitrogen pollution from individual septic systems and increasing treatment accountability.

We also appreciate that the County is incorporating an amendment process for the FLUM to account for new data or changes in existing data. We look forward to sharing data that indicate areas with high groundwater nitrate levels and high potential for groundwater recharge in the Upper Gallatin. We also are excited to continue collaboration with the County and other stakeholders to ensure that these important protections are effectively implemented and maintained for the benefit of the Upper Gallatin Watershed.

The planning staff did an excellent job engaging the community, stakeholders, and technical experts to inform the FLUM. Thank you for your work in facilitating smart, sustainable growth and the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at 406-993-2519 or kristin@gallatinrivertaskforce.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kristin Gardner".

Kristin Gardner
Chief Executive and Science Officer
Gallatin River Task Force