Bonner/Milltown Sewer Study
Gary Matson's Notes from meeting held by HDR, Monday, 18 April, 2016

Attending: Craig Caprara, HDR; Dan Harmon, HDR; Coralynn Revis, HDR (Project Manager for the Study); Greg Robertson, Amy Rose, Burt Caldwell, Steve Fisher, Gary Matson, Mike Boehme, Steve Nelson

1. The HDR study will evaluate 4 waste treatment alternatives and the likely cost of each:
    a. Status quo (do nothing). Allow existing systems to continue and issue permits as needed for maintenance/replacement
    b. Connect to Missoula treatment plant *(It's Gary's understanding that this connection could be made under an agreement with the County that would exempt the service area from city annexation, which along with cost will be a critical concern of Milltown/Bonner residents)*
    c. Satellite Level II systems in multiple service areas – for example, one facility could serve West Riverside and another Bonner/Milltown.
    d. One centralized treatment facility
2. Cost – As part of the study, sources of grants, State participation, etc. would be identified as well as the likely net cost to the individual landowner.
3. Siting – meeting participants helped identify land parcels in the area that could potentially provide enough land area to site a treatment plant.
    - Depending upon the type of facility, a smaller or larger parcel would be required. To treat and discharge into a river (very unlikely this would be approved by State or County) would require a smaller parcel. Two to five acres might be required for on-site treatment without discharge to a river.
    - Parcels identified as (hypothetically) possible included the IP "dump" by the Milltown State Park, the Harris Thermal property just west of the Blackfoot R., the Town Pump property between First Street and Hwy 210, and the Bonner mill property.
4. Areas included – We talked about the possibility of including residential areas that were not shown on the HDR map. There are residences south of Hwy 210 on Tamarack Dr., the Greil mobile home park to the West, on Juniper Dr., and a subdivision south of I-90 just off Rustic Road and bordering the Milltown State Park property. Greg observed that the cost of including such areas would far exceed the benefit and they should not be included; the area to focus on is West Riverside/Bonner/Milltown.
5. The question about inspection of existing systems and identifying potential problem areas. This will not be a house-by-house inspection or anything of the kind. Instead, it would be a review of existing permits.
6. Among the concerns residents may have are: a) The cost to construct a "public treatment system;" b) Their being required to hook up to it.
    a. A possible financing mechanism includes establishing a "Special Improvement District" (SID). The SID would be created by vote of the landowners in the proposed district. The County would add an amount to the

tax bill of District taxpayers to retire the debt incurred by the construction/operation of the public treatment system.

- An SID is established when the majority of landowners in the proposed district vote to approve. Renters e.g. those renting a mobile home lot, house, or apartment do not have a right to vote on the SID.

b. Existing treatment systems, including "cesspools" and septic tank/drainfields would be allowed to continue without a requirement to hook up to the public system so long as the owner has not signed a "waiver of right to protest" (see Part C, following).

c. If an individually owned treatment system (e.g. septic tank/drainfield) requires maintenance or replacement Missoula County may require the owner to sign a waiver of right to protest before issuing a permit for the maintenance. The signed waiver would prevent the landowner from objecting (voting against) a sewer SID and may require them to connect to the system when it is constructed. However, the County has never exercised its authority using this waiver procedure and its constitutionality has not been verified (fundamentally, denial of the right to vote). Landowners having recently received permits for waste treatment construction or maintenance may find that their permit included such a waiver.

d. HDR is investigating the circumstances under which a landowner can be required by the Missoula City-County Health Department to connect to an available public treatment system and will share this information with the public.

7. Kettlehouse – A special case because of its unique waste characteristics. Siting a public facility nearby may bring a benefit to Kettlehouse at a cost lower than maintaining its own facility

8. Timeline, public involvement – The study is expected to take about 9 months. There will be 3 informational public meetings with opportunities for public input. The first meeting can be expected sometime during May.

9. *Need/benefit considerations that may be important (we did not discuss these at the meeting; added by Gary as a p.s.)*

- *Need – What data exist to quantify the risk to the aquifer? Landowners will be asking "What's wrong with what we have now?" Can it be shown that there is unacceptable degradation of the aquifer both locally and downstream?*

- *Existing septic tank/drainfield systems. When we installed our system we were informed that drainfields functioned to"treat" waste through biological oxidation (hence the drainfield location just below the soil surface). Is this true? Are there data to show that drainfields don't adequately treat waste?*

- *Benefits – How can a landowner personally expect to benefit from connecting to a public system? How does the cost of replacing a drainfield compare to the cost of connecting? Who determines that a drainfield is no longer functioning and needs to be replaced? How near is the community to exhausting available land for drainfield replacement?*