

Bonner-Milltown-W. Riverside Sewer Feasibility Study

An engineering firm was commissioned by Missoula County with grants from several public and private sources to study the feasibility of constructing updated sewer systems for the area. Presently, sanitation requirements are limiting density to about one dwelling per two acres, all in the name of health protection. Interestingly, the completed \$50k study found no health problems associated with on-site sanitation systems in this area."

The engineer performing the study told us there isn't data to support waivers to the sanitation rules, when in fact there is a vast amount of data showing no water quality issues, even with the density of 8 dwellings per acre over the past hundred years in West Riverside. That's because the soils do a great job of treating our waste long before it can reach the aquifer 60-90' below septic systems. No evidence was presented that nutrients going beyond 8'. This buffer zone actually increased when the Milltown dam was removed.

A centralized system that takes raw untreated sewage from a house (via pipes, tee's, lift stations, interceptors), poses a greater risk to the environment because of backups, infiltration, inflows, leaks and breaks. According to the EPA, the failure at the centralized plant can be far greater because raw wastewater is concentrated and connecting communities more than a mile away is no longer recommended.

The engineer misinformed us by stating that modern cluster treatment systems is a larger threat to water quality than piping raw sewage under pressure over and alongside the Clark Fork River to the City's treatment plant. Even the engineer's recommendation of a central plant in the Bonner area, adds risks that do not currently exist, because the collection system passes under highways, railroads and over the river. Neighborhood cluster systems can avoid this risk and costs while treating waste to a higher level than the existing treatment plant can.

The cost effective, environmentally friendly solution is to phase in cluster or onsite treatment systems as needed that treat waste to the NSF-40 Certification before discharging into the ground. Modern odorless treatment systems take much less space than dispersal systems and can even be under a paved driveway while larger systems can be under a park or football field.

We requested a study of alternatives to connecting to the City. Instead, the Delphi Technique was used to facilitate the public meetings, making us think we were choosing the best option when in reality the only option offered to us was centralized management and taxation. Even the homeowners that don't need to connect (like the Hellgate Dr. neighborhood) would be taxed under the proposed options.

U.S. Congress and the EPA are encouraging State and Local governments to move away from the failed centralized treatment and management models to decentralized models with cluster systems. They can still be managed by the County, but the door is open for other public and private utilities, private corporations and nonprofit organizations in addition to homeowner management models. The City Council needs to remove the Bonner area from the City of

Missoula's Treatment Plant Service Area boundary map before these models can be proposed. This map was designated to encourage infill growth and increase revenue in Missoula at the expense of the urban areas like Bonner via a Deed Restriction that landowners are compelled to sign when increasing use.

The community said no to connecting to Missoula and it was the lowest recommended option by the engineer, so the City no longer has justification leaving the Bonner Area in the map. The Commissioners can regain our respect by asking the City to remove the Bonner area from the map and promote the healthy, sustainable treatment solutions that can move our communities forward. Our land values and community will remain stagnant unless the centralized management and taxation threat of the City is removed.

Once removed, then the planning process for our neighborhoods can begin, then professional engineers can pursue waivers to sanitation requirements for those neighborhoods like the EPA is promoting and funding. Waivers must be granted because modern treatment systems have a "Non-significant" impact on the aquifer in these areas. Only then will our communities be prosperous again.

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Ex-resident, current landowner in W. Riverside hoping to upgrade the mobile home lots I installed over 40 years ago to help improve the character of the neighborhood and promote solutions to the stagnate policies restricting use of our properties.