



**Minutes**  
Water Quality Advisory Council  
May 9, 2017  
Missoula City-County Health Department  
301 West Alder 7:00 p.m.

**Present:**

Bev Young - WQAC  
Don Latham - WQAC  
Daniel Westberg – WQAC  
Jon Harvala – WQD staff  
Peter Nielsen – WQD/WQAC

Bruce Simms - WQAC  
Ian Magruder - WQAC  
Lucretia Olson – WQAC  
Brett Rosenberg – WQAC  
Marcia Diasa – UM/Public Health

Ron Russell - WQAC  
Andrea Stanley – WQAC  
Kelly Willett – WQAC  
Kali Backer - WQAC

**Septic/Sewer Connections in the Water Quality District, 1997 – 2017**

- Peter Nielsen presented a report on the Health Board’s Strategic Goal for groundwater protection, related to septic systems and sewer connections in the Water Quality District. The Board’s Goal is - **Goal 2:** Ensure that connections to public sewer systems inside the Water Quality District occur at a rate such that the total number of septic systems in the District does not increase over time.

Over a twenty year period Missoula has reduced the percentage of residential properties in the WQD connected to septic systems from 38% to 22%. Sewer connections increased over the same time period from 62% to 78%. Septic system connections in the District peaked in 1999 at 11,901, and this was reduced to a total of 10,250 in 2017.

Over a thirty year period, 6,437 Dwellings were Connected to Sewer, eliminating 1,287,400 GPD Wastewater Load to groundwater.

Significant downward trends have resulted for nitrate-N in monitoring wells and public supply wells in the Missoula Valley.

At the same time there have been significant reductions in effluent nitrogen and phosphorus concentrations from the Missoula WWTP.

A DEQ investigation in the river found highly significant decreasing trends in total and soluble nitrogen at Station CFR-18, Clark Fork River below Missoula. This was the only station on the entire river which demonstrated a significant improvement in nitrogen. The only decreasing trend in soluble reactive phosphorus was found at CFR-18, Clark Fork River below Missoula.

All of these improvements occurred during a time period in which the Missoula City limits and population approximately doubled.

The council discussed the report and agreed that the Department continue to monitor trends in this data in the future. Ongoing regulations such as the time of sale connection ordinance may be sufficient to maintain progress on this strategic goal. Use of nitrogen removal septic systems may also increase in the future. Other measures may be considered in the future if appropriate, including connection of septic systems in the Grant Creek drainage which is one area not exhibiting a positive downward trend in not rate groundwater concentrations.

## Updates on issues and projects

Haz Waste Days – negotiating scope and budget with architect/ engineer for construction of the facility. Proposing budget to add half time staff to operate facility. Staff position to be paid for by combination of reduced expenses compared to the annual event budget, reduced contractor expense, and use of WQD cash. In the future a WQD fee increase may be necessary to pay for increased operations costs. The Council continues to strongly support the expansion of this program and construction of the facility.

Stormwater – Caras Park project bids came in within budget and the project will be constructed this fall. City stormwater utility staff are able to come to June WQAC meeting to update the Council on the utility, stormwater management plans and seek our comments.

Smurfit – Still awaiting information from EPA on topics such as the berm investigation, groundwater monitoring plans, deep groundwater well sampling results, POGB investigation and related topics. EPA and DEQ are reportedly negotiating on these topics with the PRPs International Paper and WestRock.

## Review of the Council and Water Quality District activities, discussion of upcoming issues and Upcoming agendas

Ian Magruder reviewed the Council's Charge. Peter Nielsen reviewed the Council's history, the formation of the Water Quality District, the powers and authorities of the Commissioners, City Council, Water Quality District Board and the WQAC, the Missoula Water Quality Ordinance, and topics addressed by the Council in recent years. The Council will be thirty years old in 2018.

The Council discussed ideas for improving coordination with the WQD Board, and topics for future agendas. It was agreed that we would provide the Council with a copy of the Water Quality and Health Board agendas every month prior to the WQAC meeting. Council members are welcome to attend the Board meetings.

Ideas for upcoming agenda topics included the Missoula County Conservation District's listening sessions on natural resource issues, stormwater, Smurfit and the Rattlesnake Dams. Staff will contact the Conservation District about coming to an upcoming meeting to discuss common concerns and provide the Council with an opportunity to comment. Peter Nielsen offered to do a background presentation on the dams at an upcoming meeting. The City stormwater utility staff will be invited to the June meeting. Smurfit-Stone should continue to be a top priority for the Council.

Submitted by: Peter Nielsen