

**WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**10:00 A.M. July 14,2023**

**Room 111, DEQ Metcalf Building & Zoom Webinar**

**FINAL MEETING MINUTES**

**ATTENDEES**

Amanda Knuteson  
Eric Campbell  
Tiffany Lyden  
Conrad Eckert  
Dennis Teske  
Teri Polumsky  
Ron Pifer  
Shannon Holmes  
Mike Koopal  
Rachel Clark  
Nathan Bartow  
Ed Coleman  
Peggy Trenk  
Casey Lewis  
Rickey Schultz  
Emilie Henry  
Susie Turner  
Torie Haraldson  
Fred Collins  
Moirra Davin  
Lindsey Krywaruchka

**CALL TO ORDER**

Amanda Knuteson called the meeting to order and roll call.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Ron Pifer moved to approve the meeting agenda for July 14<sup>th</sup>. Agenda approved. Seconded by Ron Pifer.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Amanda Knuteson moved to approve minutes for May 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. Minutes approved. Seconded by Ron Pifer

**BRIEFING ITEMS**

1. Park County Septic Update- Shannon Holmes
2. Ravalli County Septic Update- Conrad Eckert
3. MT Septic Acceptance Discussion-Fred Collins/Conrad Eckert

**Park County Septic Update- Shannon Holmes**

Shannon Holmes presenting, Park County is experiencing a lot of requests for a wastewater treatment plant for septic dumping. It has been a wet June, a lot of land application sites in and around Park County were not conducive for hauling and dumping heavy trucks. They turned down all the

requests because Park County is doing a project in the city where they are getting 160 homes within the city limits off septic tanks, and they've agreed to take the septage from their septic tanks. They are anticipating around 400,000 gallons of septage from this sewer extension project. There are some license haulers in Park County that have not had as many issues with land application, and then others have been moving towards having underground storage and holding tanks just to buy them some time for when land application sites are conducive for dumping. In the last month and a half Shannon Holmes had a septic hauler out of Miles city, that was looking at setting up an operation closer to Livingston Gallatin County, because the demand for septic dumping has increased so much in the area. There are very few facilities in the state that are accepting septage. Shannon Holmes agrees, this is something that needs to be discussed with the state. Whether coming up with a solution on pre-treatment for this material, or a facility set up specifically for treating septage. Park County is seeing unprecedented growth. For those applications, they're looking at non-exempt wells and septic systems being approved daily.

### **Question/Comments**

Dennis Teske question, he has facilities for cattle, he pumps the septic systems out every 2 or 3 years. He takes that and spreads it in the fields with the cattle manure. What are the possibilities of taking that to a facility, farmers, or ranchers?

Shannon Holmes responded that hay production is one of the largest agricultural commodities in Park County. He thinks that responsibility falls on the licensed septic haulers. Of the 3 haulers they work with primarily, one hauler has no issues with land applications. He thinks that responsibility falls on the haulers, but if the city needs to take a more active role in encouraging education, that's something they're willing to do.

Shannon Holmes asked Dennis Teske, if he is taking septage from septic tanks and doing land application, any product that they generate from those land application sites needs to be dedicated to feed stock for horses and not cattle. Is that correct? It would need to be fields cut specifically to feed horses, and not consumable livestock.

Dennis Teske responded that any of those products go on irrigated fields for a variety of crops, and it's for that fertilizer value. At some point, that is going to go back to a cow, but it's processed through the soil structure and into the plant.

Shannon Holmes asked the council if anyone is aware of administrative rules of Montana, or DEQ on this topic? He gave an example of working in the city of Belgrade, where a lot of the effluent from the lagoons were used for irrigation on hayfields within the airport in Belgrade. That rancher cut and processed that hay and was told it was to be used specifically for horse feed and not to feed cattle.

Fred Collins responded he is from the DEQ and is the section supervisor for the Solid Waste Section. DEQ oversees the septic pumper program. Fred Collins explained that they do have administrative rules of Montana that outline requirements for land application of septage. Such as setbacks, slopes, annual application rates depending on what's being disposed, and it also outlines specifically in 1,758\_11 under the operation maintenance requirements for land application. It outlines a lot of different requirements when it comes to different types of crops that are going to be planted on those fields, frequency of time for different animals to raise. There's nothing specific to horses versus cattle. There are just different

timeframes that are outlined in the rules depending on the type of crop you are planting. In a lot of cases around the state, it ends up being, especially on the east side of the state, it's just grazing pastor grass. In the northwestern part of the state, farmers will use land for grazing, and then will plant crops. There are just different frequencies depending on if the crop grows in the ground, or if it grows above the ground, how it's harvested. As to what frequency you're able to harvest those crops, or let animals graze after the most recent application, you must wait 30 days after the most recent land application for animals to graze on that property. Yes, that's outlined in our administrative rules of Montana under the septic tank pumper program here at DEQ.

Shannon Holmes asked does the responsibility of pursuing land application sites solely fall on the licensed haulers? Or DEQ? Do you see some value in there being a partnership with municipalities, local governments, water sewer districts, being able to help in and promoting the value of what septage does to rebuilding soils, crops, native grasses?

Fred Collins responded as it sits right now, because of the nature of Montana. Montana has had population growth in the last few years. It has fallen on the pumpers. The state doesn't pursue those sites for the pumpers. In the state now, he sees huge value in the local municipalities' counties looking at the septage management issue. Pursuing some other alternatives for disposal, whether it's a septage specific treatment facility or pursuing land that is available for land application. Then DEQ can oversee those operations until there is centralized management of that waste. Be it a treatment plant, or however, it makes sense for the specific area of the state. Fred Collins goes on to say he sees great value in the municipalities and counties assisting in finding ways to dispose of the waste. As people start to move here more septic tanks are being built, there's more demand for disposal. However, you're building on land that now is not available for land application, and if there's not a centralized method of disposal present, especially if it's in a smaller part of the state, then there's more waste and less places to dispose of it. He thinks that there is value in making a partnership in assisting some of the pumpers and being able to provide an important service for their areas of the state.

Shannon Holmes question, are there strict guidelines on how they process or remove in-organics and global type materials as they dump their tank?

Fred Collins responded Correct. There are setback requirements, you can't apply on slopes more than 6% unless you're injecting it. You must screen litter. It's got to be spread out. It can't come out and a deluge out of the truck. It's got to be spread out so that you're not overapplying in one spot of the field. Litter must be picked up within 6 hours or by the end of the business day. There's a lot of operation and maintenance requirements when it comes to land application septage. The vehicle also must be inspected by the local county sanitarian or equivalent at the health department to make sure the spreader equipment is working properly. The administrative rules of Montana 1,750 Subchapter 8 are the all the administrative rules. There's an extensive rule set regarding land application of septage for the state and all the pumpers.

Shannon Holmes question, are there any educational or documents that are in place that promote some of the benefits of this that could be shared?

Fred Collins responded, internally DEQ is working on more educational materials that speak more to kind of the positives benefits of it. DEQ has a septic tank pumper guide. They've got the Homeowners Guide to septic systems. It's more education materials for homeowners. Then there is the counties guide for approving land application sites. Finally, DEQ has a comic book that speaks to the whole process. A

lot of the pumpers and other areas of the agency provide the comic to members of the public. Another way DEQ is trying to provide more education for the public, is when DEQ is doing press releases for these sites. Explaining more in those press releases the importance of and the benefits of the proposed action, that being land application of septage. DEQ has an internal coordination group and they've been trying to get some education materials put together. Once everything is put together and it's a benefit to county governments, and cities, DEQ might share those materials and get the word out.

Dennis Teske responded, he has been using a bioproduct on his land and it has been working well. He explained it's still experimental on his farm.

### **Ravalli County Septic Update- Conrad Eckert Chair of the Pumper Advisory Council**

Conrad Eckert presenting, the county commissioners have written a letter to Missoula City, asking them to be patient with Ravalli County as they are coming up with solutions for long term septage disposal. They're trying to find some funding. He explained the biggest concern is the cost of disposal, and how people are going to be disposing of septage if the costs get too high. They have one individual pumper now. When he hits his allotted requirement in Missoula. He's hauling it all the way to Helena. Costing him 400 to 500 dollars, just for a single load. The cost is skyrocketing for certain people. If everybody goes through that, illegal dumping is going to happen, or homeowners themselves might say they can't afford that cost and go and get a sub pump and pump it out of the ground themselves. They are at a crucial point to find alternatives to dispose of septage. It is essential to come up with a cooperative plan with the county and the state, and find a long-term land application facility, or a true disposal facility. Conrad Eckert spoke to the Bitterroot Land Trust. They have no land available. DNRC has no land available, and he is continuing to look at farmers and ranchers, but they are either continuing to hay their land, graze their land, or it's a subdivision. He goes on to say they are trying to move forward. It's just a hurry up and wait process. He thinks Ron Pifer's products are something they could look at to help reduce some pumping. He spoke to Ron Pifer and thinks they're a great product, but they're not a substitute for pumping.

### **Questions/Comments**

Ron Pifer responded; he and Conrad Eckart have met with Ravalli County commissioners regarding the septic issue. He has brought up that supplemental biologicals can extend the time between pumping. He is recommending people consider using biologicals to extend the time between pumping. In the meantime, he has reached out to the Montana State Biofilm Engineering Center. He has had some call backs from them. The whole idea is to come up with research that's been done by either Montana State, New Mexico State, or Colorado State, where they can support the idea that biologicals introduced into septic tanks can improve the wastewater treatment within the tank and extend the time between pumping. This research would allow DEQ to feel more comfortable in providing a circular or advisory memo to the public that says, we have justification to believe that micro biologicals of a wastewater treatment nature are commercially available and can extend the time between pumping. By the next meeting or possibly before, Ron Pifer will have some information to help the DEQ feel more comfortable with expanding their advice to individual septic tank users and help mitigate this process.

Amanda Knuteson responded, yes, Andy Ulven the DEQ Bureau Chief for Water Quality Planning will be back for the September meeting. Mike Koopal and Vice Chair Pifer reached out to Andy Ulven and have had a couple of phone calls. They're discussing some of these same issues discussed during this meeting. When Ron Pifer does receive more information or guidance on biofilms, please share it with the group

along with DEQ. There weren't any decisions made, WPCAC wants to continue to move in parallel with DEQ, regarding potential recommendations for how the public could extend the lives of their systems in between pumping.

Ron Pifer responded, correct, they were going to work in parallel with DEQ as a true advisory council on this, but they just wanted to get more scientific justification. He has the empirical justification, but they want some experimental justification to support it, so they're on firm footing, going forward and helping the pumper community along the way.

Teri Polumsky commented that she wanted to follow up on if there was a document that could be prepared. If there was something that could encourage people to see the value of the biologicals as a supplement, to increase the life of the septic. Speaking for the real estate community, they would love to have that, and she thinks they could push it out to their clients. Teri Polumsky continued to say, what will help with the pricing problems is predictability. That's a huge component of what they're missing when it comes to getting septic approvals and allowing people to move forward. If there's information that can help homeowners be better environmental stewards. That would be a much better received approach than the iron hand always coming down on everybody, at the time when they're trying to plan, not after, the system is in. That's when they really need to worry about it. She wanted to offer any help that they can give as real estate agents.

Amanda Knuteson responded she thinks the issue right now is that MDEQ needs a very strong foundation for any information they transmit to the public in this area right now. Andy Ulven, Fred Collins, and possibly Conrad Eckart and others within DEQ are internally preparing some suggestions and updates potentially to share publicly. As a council right now, it wouldn't be advisable for WPCAC to produce or publish their own recommendations of any kind. It needs to be done in tandem with DEQ.

Teri Polumsky responded she wasn't suggesting that they do, just whenever that document comes out, it would be helpful to have the real estate community help push it out.

Amanda Knuteson agreed, and she thinks the septic cartoon that Andy Ulven emailed out to is helpful. However, she does think it needs to be updated and supplemented, especially considering the serious issue that's going on right now with lack of disposal areas and more septic systems going in quickly before they understand fully what the consequences of this issue are going to be long term. Right now, DEQ discussions are internal, and they must work out a lot of technical supporting documentation, before they publish it to the public.

#### **MT Septic Acceptance Discussion-Fred Collins Program Section Supervisor Waste Management and Remediation/Conrad Eckert Chair of the Pumper Advisory Council**

Fred Collins presenting, one thing DEQ has done internally is coordinate between the Water Quality Division and Waste Management Division to discuss the issue from start to finish. Understanding where all the pieces and parts of the process touch and what the jurisdictions are. As the septic tank pumper program supervisor, Fred Collins hears a lot of concerns from the pumper side as well. He understands in the last few years how population growth has affected Montana when it comes to septage disposal. Both divisions felt it necessary to bring this up to senior leadership, so he put together a memo and discussed it with the DEQ director, deputy director, and his division administrator.

Fred Collins outlined the memo and went over the background. Population growth in Montana is really affecting the ability to keep up with septage management. There are more septic tanks and more waste, but less availability to dispose of it. Fred Collins outlined this to the director and gave a few examples, Flathead County being one example. Flathead county did seek funding to pursue building a septage treatment plant. However, there are some pumpers in the Flathead area that are bringing some of their septage down to Helena as well. Due to the population growth in Flathead County and availability of land there, that is an issue. Other counties are considering doing this as well because of the population growth in their perspective areas. It's imminent and very present. Fred Collins outlined in the memo the issues that arise because of population growth, and the lack of availability of disposal. He created the memo in conjunction with Andy Ulven and Eric Trum, who are in the water quality division. They assisted in the topics that are of concern from a water quality standpoint. Fred Collins continued by presenting the bullets points in the memo. These bullet points are as follows: increase population growth, suburban housing development, and associated new septic tank and installations therefore more septage to be managed, nonpoint source nutrient pollution resulting from aging and unmaintained and unpumped septic tanks, limited acreage for land application of septage due to continued development. As new houses are being built, that land is no longer available for land application. Additionally, if there's a land application site, and people start to build houses around it, there's a 500-foot setback for any residents. In some cases, up in Flathead County, existing land application sites have been built around and then eliminated as an option for disposal because of those houses being built there. That's an issue that has come up specifically in Flathead County. Also, with land application for DEQ, the education outreach piece will be key as they start to move forward. The public's perception and understanding of septage disposal further complicates the approval process, and then subsequent operations as well.

Fred Collins presenting, the education and outreach piece will be key in being able to come up with a solution. It will help the public be more aware, when it comes to what they put into their septic tanks. Then when homeowners sees a proposed site being pursued for land application of septage, their education will be key to understanding the bigger picture, and how this might be a benefit, as far as disposal is concerned. Another issue is limited capacity at wastewater treatment plants. There is a wastewater treatment plant in Kalispell that does not accept septage. Land application is the primary disposal method in the Flathead area. While pursuing a septage specific treatment plant, land application is the primary method of disposal. As a result of this, some of the treatment plants are reducing the amount of out of county septage because of the population growth in their own county. That's something they're seeing in Missoula and a few other counties because of the population growth. They want to be able to accommodate the waste that's being generated in their perspective areas of the state. As a result of increased costs to pump and disposal of septage, there's potential for some septic tank pumpers to lose their businesses depending on how long they've been established. Therefore, eliminating a necessary service in Montana. If there are areas of the state that don't have access to septic tank pumpers, there's potential for a system backing up into a home and having no one available to remedy that. It can be a potential issue down the road as well. There's potential for whole counties to not have businesses to help maintain those septic tanks, resulting in other public health issues. There is potential for illegal dumping, as options for disposal dwindle and demand increases. If you spend 600 to a thousand dollars to get your septic tank pumped, people might decide to take matters into their own

hands. Fred Collins goes on to say he does not see that right now, but it has occurred in the past. It was remedied via the DEQ enforcement program.

Fred Collins presenting, the last part of memo is about potential solutions. Internally, DEQ has the Septic and Onsite Wastewater Internal Coordination group. They continue to talk every month about different topics. This topic has come up in that group. Including speaking to education outreach materials and ways that at some point, DEQ can go public with those materials. One action item that they have is engaging with MACO, the Montana Association of Counties and the League of Cities and Towns. Engaging with MACO and the municipalities is important to advocating for either bolstering current treatment plants to accept more waste or assisting in finding land that's available for land applications. Then DEQ can continue to manage this in a way that meets administrative rules of Montana and bolster infrastructure to be able to manage waste. DEQ has the septic tank pumper advisory council. Conrad Eckert is the chair and Fred Collins is part of that council as well. Engaging that group and continuing to come up with different solutions is important. Fred Collins thinks engaging as many stakeholders as possible to help, in a curved and appropriate way, will help move in a good direction. The director of DEQ is making phone calls and engaging to have this topic be of discussion. The director is going to reach out to MACO and the League of Cities and Towns to have this be a topic at that level as well. He thinks that will be a good springboard for action items at the local level to assist as well. Fred Collins goes on to say that's what he's been able to do with the issues that they have. In the Septic Pumper Advisory Council, but then in SONIC, that's the internal coordination group between water quality and waste management, the next step within the next few weeks is to engage with MACO and League of Cities and Towns, and present the memo to them, and see what action items might happen.

### **Question/Comments**

Amanda Knuteson question, to a comment memo that was supplied by Montana League of Cities and Towns, and the Montana Petroleum Association, Montana Mining Association, and the Treasurer State Resources Association. There's a lot of substantive remarks, will you be addressing those moving forward?

Shannon Holmes asked how many municipalities and wastewater facilities are you aware of, specifically, in the western part of the state that allow septage dumping at their facility?

Fred Collins responded the City of Helena wastewater treatment plant, Missoula's facility does, city of Billings, Livingston accepts a limited amount on a case-by-case basis, there's several lagoons that accept, Butte Silver Bow, Anaconda Deer Lodge, Great Falls facility accepts septage, Columbus has a treatment plant that accepts, Town of West Yellowstone, Coal Strip Wastewater Treatment plant, Laurel has a wastewater facility, Town of Circle, City of Poplar, City of Lewistown, City of Hardin, City of Scobey, Big Timber, there are some small ones that don't, Ravalli County. Kalispell does not. They have a bigger treatment, but they do not accept septage. There are some treatment plants that aren't designed for that amount of waste. By his understanding they're not engineered to accommodate the nitrogen content of that waste. The DEQ Water Protection Bureau has a list of approved treatment plants. They keep a running list of those because they get some of their approvals through the Water Protection Bureau. Fred Collins suggested reaching out to the Water Protection Bureau. He believes they have a list of those treatment plants in the state. The disposal sites that are on DEQ's pumpers licenses, so they

know where that waste is going, and they submit the disposal logs to DEQ. The approval process is when the pumper seeks out that disposal site. It's approved at the local level first. Once DEQ gets the application, whether it's a land application site, or a treatment plant, it needs to be signed and certified by the local county health officer or designated representative prior to coming to DEQ's program to be reviewed. If the local county health officer or designated representative has not signed off on it, it's not considered a complete application. DEQ will then send it back to the septic tank pumper to get that completed and get the local certification prior to review at DEQ.

Shannon Holmes responded it does sound like there's a fair amount of wastewater facilities or lagoon facilities that are accepting it. He is in the situation of speaking on behalf of the other public works directors in the state. They are still navigating through the adaptive management plan process through the nutrient work group. Nothing has been finalized but he thinks they're getting close to the finish line. Just the wastewater treatment and what the requirements are going to be for discharging into receiving streams is still a work in progress.

Amanda Knuteson commented, the substantive comment memo that was provided to WPCAC for this meeting is going to be part of the basis for a comprehensive nutrient work group update at the September meeting. She wanted to call attention to it, because there is a lot of information that she thinks is important for WPCAC to review and be aware of. They'll have a little bit more clarity on that when they have the next meeting.

Peggy Trenk commented on the memo referencing the general comment, because nutrients aren't on the agenda for this meeting. Treasure State Resources Association and Peggy Trunk is one of the signers and participants regarding the letter. These comments reference the draft rules in December. They haven't had many meetings through the legislature. They know DEQ has been working on some changes to the language. Peggy Trunk went on to say they haven't seen those yet, but they'll see some of these concerns have been addressed and continue to be part of the work group meeting. She wanted to catch up on where folks were in terms of the discharges, and continuing concerns. They'll be prepared for a more robust discussion in September. She thanked Amanda Knuteson for calling it to attention and encouraging folks to read it.

Amanda Knuteson responded by saying she appreciated the very clear and organized manner with which they approached the comments. She found it easy to follow its heavy, substantive technical information, but it's very organized. It will help give a good foundation for that discussion in September.

Mike Koopal question, does DEQ provide any monitoring of the land disposal sites? Has there been any ground water testing for things like pharmaceuticals and personal carrier products and other contaminants, just to inform us or calibrate the up-site approval process at DEQ?

Fred Collins responded, right now, they have a septic to land application monitoring program. The septic and pumper program is funded by fees. It's a \$300 a year fee for a license, and any additional disposal site to be added is free right now. The program is not heavily funded. What they were able to do about 3 years ago is implement the Septage Land Application Monitoring Program. Right now, they're doing soil testing at the sites verifying AAR the Annual Application Rates and making sure over application is not occurring. They conduct compliance inspections at least annually, if not more frequently. If there are operational issues, they don't see a lot of operational issues, but when they do, they try to jump on those quickly and get those remedied. As far as groundwater monitoring or surface water monitoring, they have not currently done that. They don't have the capacity within their program. As they start to



discuss the issues that might arise around land application, that might be something down the road that they could start to do. At this point, it might have to be a joint effort internally, and has not been discussed as an action item now. If concerns continue to rise, that might be something down the road DEQ could consider but must be a joint effort, or a discussion of fee increases within the pumper program. That might result in rulemaking and other administrative items that they could start to implement to put that in place.

Mike Koopal question, do you inventory existing land application sites and the physical parameters associated with each, so at some point if they do collect monitoring data from ground water. They can compare those site conditions that may work better for a land application. Do you have an inventory of the setting for these land application sites soil types, for instance. So that data can be overlaid at some point with any monitoring data to really inform what specific site conditions work best for the land application process.

Fred Collins responded they don't have an inventory. Before any land application site is approved, they do an environmental assessment. The information is there, it's just not centralized. They're working through EGOV and making things electronic. That's something they are working towards. He was able to hire someone in the septic tank pumper program in March. That's something that they could work towards and get an inventory of the types of soils at these sites. It's something that would be relatively easy to compile. It might take a little bit of time, but they have all that information.

Amanda Knuteson following up on what Mike Koopal mentioned. A few years ago, she became aware there was a permitted disposal site, in a rural location in Gallatin County, so it was permitted at a time when it was very rural, and then left dormant for a long time, but the permit was also revoked. The conditions happening all around it would have made it a site that wouldn't have been approved for disposal today. Do you have a protocol for dealing with that scenario? Now there's so much pressure, with lack of disposal. This must not be the only site like that. It's just out there ready, potentially to be used again.

Fred Collins responded, Do you know where the site is? Is there development happening around the site?

Amanda Knuteson responded there is, but she didn't want to go into too much specificity about it. This is a circumstance that she doesn't think is unique and doesn't want to misleadingly identify something as not a good spot for disposal if it is. It's one of those things where sometime in the 1990's or early 2000s, it was approved, when nothing was going on around it. It didn't end up being used, but potentially now could be.

Fred Collins responded, if it still meets the minimum requirements of the administrative rule, meaning the setbacks are still there. Operations are being followed. They're not land applying on slopes more than 6%. They're able to stay at least 500 feet away from any residents. Surface water setbacks, distance down to groundwater, if those minimum requirements are met it could still be used. There was a site up in Flathead County, where houses were built around that site. They would go out and inspect the site and say, now that there's a house built on this corner, we've got to come back 500 feet. Here's your new setback, so you can't land apply outside of your site. Then more houses were built, and suddenly there just wasn't a site left. They had to remove the site because it no longer met the minimum requirements of the rule. If that's something they note on an inspection, or it's brought to their attention, they would then verify and adjust accordingly. Adjust what's available for land application, or if for some reason

development occurs, such as the site is no longer suitable. They would have to revoke that site, and either find alternative sites for disposal or, if it's the only disposal site, they would have to find a treatment plant.

Amanda Knuteson responded process wise, it would need to be that you would note on inspection, or someone would alert you to it. It wouldn't be that the owner of the site would contact you and say they're going to start dumping. They could just quietly start dumping once it's approved.

Fred Collins responded, once a land application site is approved it's approved into perpetuity, unless operations tell them that they need to revoke it, because when they're being negligent, or they go on an inspection and there's houses in the vicinity. You can't land apply septage within 500 feet. All pumpers must submit disposal logs to the DEQ program on each site. For the land application sites DEQ can verify annual application rates. There's a lot of conversations DEQ has had with the pumpers, so DEQ will know which fields pumpers are going to be using or not using. Fred Collins explained in some cases, pumpers have been at a land application site, and then they acquire a treatment plant. Then they'll just go to the treatment plant, but they have the land application site in case of an emergency. Every year DEQ is aware of which sites are being used and how much is being disposed of. They verify annual application rates and make sure, through inspections, that everything's going well.

Amanda Knuteson responded she didn't know that DEQ was doing annual tracking.

Ron Pifer commented regarding conversations he's had with Conrad Eckert in Ravalli County. Where pumpers are abusing their rights to pump properly, and according to set up protocols. In one case they had a situation where pumpage was put in the Bitter Root River as identified by some local fly-fishing guides. When it was called into Ravalli County, they refused to do anything about it, and referred to Missoula. Then Missoula referred to Ravalli. Nothing happened and there's been situations where land applications have been made improperly. As this crisis with limited legitimate land application sites becomes further impacted. There's going to be more crazy behavior going on where sewage is being put places it's not supposed to be, and into receiving waters. It's just going to get worse. Fred Collins is passing this information on to the director and to other people. Solutions that are reasonable and supported by science need to be part and parcel of what is communicated to the public going forward. Ron Pifer goes on to say he is going to do his part to look at scientific studies that compare the addition of proper biologicals for extending the time between pumpage. There's got to be research out there in state government or universities that have done this kind of work.

Amanda Knuteson responded by encouraging Ron Pifer to forward materials between now and the September meeting and share with the group. Then they can have a more detailed discussion about it. Everything's on pause regarding what Andy Ulven is going to do. Amanda Knuteson goes on to say it would be good if Ron Pifer could forward on any communication he'd like to share, and that he'd like to discuss at the next meeting.

Ron Pifer responded he'd be happy to share that information. A lot of research professors are on vacation or break, or they're attending conferences during the summertime, so their availability is not as good as it would be in the fall. Ron Pifer goes on to say he will continue reaching out to universities and research online regarding Biofilms. He asked the group if anybody had any information that they forwarded to him via email or phone. It's important to find support for biofilms with scientific research that compares biological additives to systems that don't have biological additives in them.

Fred Collins commented, regarding the septage dumping the county had observed, if there's any activities that seem against the rules, or there's concern. The DEQ Enforcement division takes those complaints, and then refers them to programs within DEQ for solutions. If there's photos, dates, times, and something that DEQ can follow up on at the agency level, reach out to the DEQ enforcement program. Then they can refer those to the programs that they pertain to, in this case, the pumpers. If there's a specific pumper that might be doing something illegally. Information can be sent to the enforcement program.

Amanda Knuteson clarified there wasn't any observation of anything untoward. It was her own due diligence on the property. It was adjacent to an area that apparently had been permitted as a dump site, but hadn't been used as one, but still potentially could at any moment.

Conrad Eckert commented there's been some things brought up with illegal dumping. It's just hard to get proof a lot of times. Regarding facilities, if anybody's has any ideas for funding, or if there's any water quality funding that we could use for grant money or anything like that? They could pass that information on to the different counties that are having problems. He thinks if they could come up with facilities designated for septage receiving, it would really limit the illegal dumping going on. At that point the citizenry would even say, there is a place to take septage. Trying to get funding for facilities is the biggest problem but illegal dumping is becoming a bigger issue all the time. Conrad Eckert goes on to say some things have been brought to his attention by the citizens and he is glad things are being brought to the forefront, and action is being taken.

### **Questions/Comments**

Conrad Eckert asked Ron Pifer to contact him following the meeting.

Ron Pifer responded; he will contact Conrad Eckert after the meeting.

Amanda Knuteson asked Ron Pifer if there is anything that he feels the group would benefit knowing, to please reach out so they can have a meaningful discussion at the next meeting.

Ron Pifer responded yes, he would, and he'll be putting something together after he has had discussions with several research professors, that work in their respective wastewater divisions. He suggested having another sub meeting to keep the process going.

### **Future Agenda Items**

- Amanda Knuteson added a substantive nutrient work group update to the agenda.
- Possibly an update on the topics discussed at today's meeting from Shannon Holmes, Conrad Eckert, and Fred Collins
- Amanda Knuteson will email the entire group the Triennial Review information. An action item for immediate follow up.
- Mike Koopal responded it looks like EPA and Fish, Wildlife, and Parks supplied substantial comments to those changes.
- Amanda Knuteson responded yes, they did, and she will send the comments out as well.
- Conrad Eckert commented that he would like information on the next meeting in September.

- Fred Collins commented that he will be available for the next meeting. If there's any updates once he reaches out to MACO and Cities and Towns. If he has any updates on how that went, he will be ready to provide those.

**Next meeting:** September 22, 2023

**Meeting was adjourned by Amanda Knuteson**