

Missoula County Commissioners

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BCC 2022-068
Jan. 20, 2021

Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Director Hank Worsch
1420 E. Sixth Ave.
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

RE: Clearwater Junction RV Dump Station

Dear Director Worsch:

We have a long history of valuing and stewarding the amazing natural resources and diverse array of outdoor recreation opportunities found throughout Missoula County. These resources are not only essential to residents' quality of life, but also attract visitors, who provide positive economic impact to our local economy and others throughout Montana. Over the years, we have worked closely with Fish, Wildlife and Parks and other partner agencies and organizations to find creative ways to address the needs and challenges of continuing to provide high-quality natural resource management and outdoor recreation opportunities to the public. We look forward to continuing this approach into the future.

The Seeley Lake Community Council recently provided the Missoula Board of County Commissioners with a letter (attached) articulating concerns about the continued closure of the Recreational Vehicle (RV) dump station located at the Montana Department of Transportation rest area at Clearwater Junction. As you know, this facility has traditionally been heavily used by those traveling and camping in the Highway 83 and Highway 200 corridors. The closest alternative for those needing to empty holding tanks is located at Lindey's Steak House in Seeley Lake, which is 14 miles away. The closest other alternatives are in Lincoln or Missoula, which are approximately 40 miles away. With the dramatic COVID-related increase in outdoor recreation, and camping specifically, the Lindey's dump station is not able to keep up with the demand for RV dumping. Lack of facilities coupled with the distance to alternative dump facilities has also led to some campers simply emptying their gray and black tanks along roadways – presenting very real health, safety and environmental concerns.

Missoula FWP staff have informed us of the dump station's current state of disrepair and the high cost (~\$500,000) of returning the site to functional operation. We also understand this is likely one of many recreation infrastructure needs across the state you may be striving to address as an agency. The state of Montana's robust tourism economy and increased public demand for opportunities and services has led to a perfect storm of recreation infrastructure that is past its operational lifespan, as well as significant maintenance backlogs and underfunded operations and staffing levels for those with management responsibilities. The Clearwater Dump Station is but one example of this playing out in real time and the significant impacts it presents to Montana

communities like Seeley Lake. To that end, we strongly encourage the State of Montana to commit more funding and support to statewide outdoor recreation infrastructure and management efforts.

In closing, we encourage FWP to prioritize the repair and reopening of the Clearwater Junction RV dump station as a soon as is reasonably possible. We also stand willing to continue our efforts to creatively partner with you, the Community of Seeley Lake and others to seek a workable solution. We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to hearing from you on how to begin our efforts to return the site to operation.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Juanita Vero, Chair

Josh Slotnick, Commissioner

David Strohmaier, Commissioner

BCC/ac