

Options to fund wastewater treatment facility for Bridger Valley considered

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Looking to the future of wastewater management in Bridger Valley, area leaders are in the process of seeing what options are available to best suit everyone in the area.

Mountain View Public Works Director Dave Dasher said replacing the current lagoon and septic systems with a treatment facility is an option that leaders from the area are considering.

However, it is costly and no large state grant money is available for sewer projects.

"Grant money is not an option. Well, there are some small grants, but it wouldn't be enough. We're looking at possibly a regional plan to do away with lagoons and have a treatment plant. We're still in the research and discussion phases," Dasher said. "Mountain View's current treatment facility was built in the 1970s and has outlived its growth. Lyman's system is nearing that point. This will take a Valley group effort to improve the quality of life here."

One step in the research area that has already been taken is that Sunrise Engineering, Inc. was contracted to conduct a study on what is being called the regional wastewater plan. At the Lyman Town Council meeting held Thursday, Feb. 21, the engineering firm presented their findings.

"Sunrise gathered information on topics such as septics and fecal count in the rivers and presented a synopsis of their findings. We're trying to identify problems and determine the capacity of the systems," Dasher said.

This isn't just a Mountain View and Lyman problem, Dasher said. The whole area is being looked at, including Urie, Fort Bridger and the Lower Bench.

It's no secret, he noted, that the Blacks Fork and Smiths Fork are on the Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) list of impaired waters.

"In all fairness, we all do have compliance issues," Dasher said. "We go through times when we're in compliance and times when we are outside the regulations. If loans from the state are available to address this issue, we would probably be at the top of the list."

It was brought out at the Lyman Town Council meeting that studies on the E. coli bacteria were conducted between the summer of 2003 and 2006 on both the Blacks Fork and Smiths Forks rivers. Both were noted to be impaired. Out of a survey of 100 towns, Mountain View and Lyman both ranked high as needing improvements. Bridger Valley, as a whole, ranks high on the state's priority list to improve the wastewater system.

"When you talk about impairment, you're not just talking about the towns. It's a combination of users in the towns and the county," he said.

Kerri Sabey, District Manager of the Uinta County Conservation District (UCCD), said the district has tried to address issues with the impaired rivers from a local stand rather than have federal government mandates.

She said UCCD works with landowners to try and help address issues and offer assistance through grants and cost-share programs to improve the situation.

"We offer septic remediation and work with producers who may have animals who have access to the rivers. We work with them to move their corrals off the creek. We help develop a water source with wells. There are cost-share programs available for septic remediation and relocating corrals," Sabey said. Anyone

interested in these programs can contact the district office at 787-3794, ext. 4.

UCCD also monitors the E. coli bacteria count in the rivers.

"We test in May, August and September. We test five times within 30 days," she said.

Sabey furthered explained that the rivers in this area are classified as a 2AB, which is a cold water fisheries and recreation designation. She also noted that the Valley does not meet the requirements for this classification and, hence, the impaired status.

Dasher said the next step is a meeting on March 11 to discuss the findings and recommendations of Sunrise Engineering and to make a decision on how to best proceed with improvements for the Valley.