



Jacob Gabell <jacob.gabell@bonnercountyid.gov>

[EXT SENDER] AM0001-24 Bonner County Comprehensive Plan Component Update – Natural Resources

Dan McCracken <Dan.McCracken@deq.idaho.gov>

Tue, Feb 6, 2024 at 5:04 PM

To: Jake Gabell <jake.gabell@bonnercountyid.gov>

Cc: Kristie May <Kristie.May@deq.idaho.gov>, Matt Linscott <matt.linscott@bonnercountyid.gov>, Allan Songstad <allan.songstad@bonnercountyid.gov>, Don Davis <don.davis@bonnercountyid.gov>

Hi Jake,

For the Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer, limiting individual septic density to 5-acres would be a preventative measure to maintain the good water quality in that aquifer. It can be difficult and expensive to reverse negative water quality trends if you wait to implement protective measures until after you start seeing impacts. I would suggest that even though water quality in the aquifer is good today, individual septic density in this area is an important issue for Bonner County to think about in your land use planning. The availability of water over the SVRPA makes it a desirable place to develop, but we know that developing a large number of houses on small lots with septic systems is a threat to water quality in the aquifer.

For the water temperature comment, perhaps avoiding discussion of water-rights in the text would be best as that is certainly IDWR's purview. I think the intent of our comment was more along the lines of considering changes in water demand with land use changes, and how that affects water quality – in this case temperature of surface water bodies. We were thinking about forest land being converted to residential. I don't think it is in conflict with State law for the county to consider known water availability in land use planning. As an example, we know that there are certain times of the year that flows in Priest River below Outlet Dam are low and that causes water quality and temperature issues. The County might decide that based on that known condition, and a desire to maintain good water quality in the river, that they could retain parcels along the river in Ag/Forestry 20 as opposed to converting them to Rural 5. Or, keep them at Rural 5 instead of increasing density to Suburban. This is just a suggestion for how the county might incorporate these water quality topics into your plan. We recognize that you have lots of other considerations as well, and that might not even be consistent with what the county/public wants.

Let me know if you would like to discuss further.

-Dan



Dan McCracken, P.E. | Regional Administrator

Idaho Department of Environmental Quality

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Our mission is to protect human health and the quality of Idaho's air, land, and water.

From: Jake Gabell <jake.gabell@bonnercountyid.gov>
Sent: Saturday, February 3, 2024 3:06 PM
To: Dan McCracken <Dan.McCracken@deq.idaho.gov>
Cc: Kristie May <Kristie.May@deq.idaho.gov>; Matt Linscott <matt.linscott@bonnercountyid.gov>; Allan Songstad <allan.songstad@bonnercountyid.gov>; Don Davis <don.davis@bonnercountyid.gov>
Subject: Re: [EXT SENDER] AM0001-24 Bonner County Comprehensive Plan Component Update – Natural Resources

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Good afternoon Dan,

First off, thank you for your comments regarding the update to the Bonner County comprehensive plan, natural resource component. Comments from agencies have been instrumental in updating the comprehensive plan components for the past couple of years. I have a few follow-up questions to clarify some statements made in the comment you provided.

In point number 4 of your comment, you mention the SVPRA and that a portion lies within Bonner County. A couple of months ago, Anna Moody and Chris Westerman attended a meeting with Bonner County Planning staff and Planning Commission Matt Linscott. We asked Anna and Chris about the Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer and if Bonner County needs to implement a 5-acre minimum on the portion located in Bonner County and over the SVRPA. The answer was no and it was further explained that testing did not show impacts in that portion of Bonner County as compared to Kootenai County. Was there recent testing to show the contrary? If so, are there test results that you can forward for our records? I am a firm believer in protecting our natural resources, but any time we further restrict property use it must be backed up with substantial evidence and objective criteria.

In point 5.d you state "The 'high water temperatures' section could benefit from a discussion about how increased development pressure increases the need for additional water rights withdrawals. This leads to lower flows and increased in-stream temperatures." I have weighed this idea against Idaho Code 67-6537 and find that there is a discrepancy. "67-6537. USE OF SURFACE AND GROUND WATER. (1) The intent of this section is to encourage the use of surface water for irrigation. All applicants proposing to make land use changes shall be required to use surface water, where reasonably available, as the primary water source for irrigation." As Bonner County does not regulate water rights, would this idea be better suited to IDWR to limit/restrict further water rights permits on certain streams?

Respectfully,

Jake Gabell, Director

Bonner County Planning Department

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Sandpoint, ID 83864

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On Tue, Jan 23, 2024 at 4:53 PM Dan McCracken <Dan.McCracken@deq.idaho.gov> wrote:

Please find the attached letter providing Idaho DEQ comments on the proposed updates to the Natural Resources section of the Bonner County Comprehensive Plan AM0001-24.

-Dan



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