

Financing septic upgrades

By now, most Whitefish residents are aware of the issues regarding septic leachate around Whitefish Lake. Last month in this column we described the Whitefish Community Wastewater Committee that was formed to work on protecting the lake from further contamination. Today, we want to explain what is being done to address financial concerns regarding septic system upgrade options.

Water, Wastewater and Solid Waste Action Coordination Team

The committee is working with the Water, Wastewater and Solid Waste Action Coordination Team to identify funding options. In 1982, a group of federal, state and nonprofit professionals that finance, regulate, or provide technical assistance for community water and wastewater systems, began meeting to coordinate and cultivate their efforts. This group meets several times a year to find ways to improve the infrastructure of Montana's water, wastewater and solid waste systems.

While all of the programs have diverse missions, they share some common elements such as providing grants or loans, taking applications to fund projects,

The Water Closet

and administering funded projects for communities. The action coordination team members put together a common preliminary engineering report that is acceptable to all of the agencies. Its success led to the development of the Uniform Application for Montana Public Facility Projects, a process that includes a commonly accepted application form, environmental checklist, and preliminary engineering report guidelines.

Because a number of funding options are usually required to bring these projects to fruition, the action coordination team helps make the process easier for communities. The group provides information, workshops, technical assistance, and financial assistance among other services. They have helped several communities work through the process of identifying problems, engineering solutions, and funding the work required. Participating organizations include a number of federal and state agencies as well as private and nonprofit organizations and programs.

Repairing, replacing, and upgrading septic systems around the lake will not happen overnight. It will require an investment of time and resources by many dedicated people and organizations. The WCWC is excited to have the action coordination team as a partner in this process to help identify ways to get the work done as efficiently and cost effectively as possible.

Nutrient Trading

The City of Whitefish is also looking into nutrient trading as a tool to provide economic support for the cleanup of septic leachate. The State of Montana has drafted a policy for nutrient trading which will provide numeric criteria for nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) in an effort to reduce nutrient loading and meet wastewater facility compliance criteria. A nutrient trading program could allow the city to obtain compliance credits for financially assisting homeowners in hooking up to the city sewer system where available or where city sewer is unavailable for joining a communal septic system or upgrading to modern individual on-site septic system technology. This would directly reduce the amount of expenditure required to meet nutri-

ent loading criteria for its wastewater facility while also helping homeowners. Although in its early stages, the economic and natural resource benefits of nutrient trading appear to be very promising for the community. Participation in this program would reduce nutrient loading to Whitefish Lake and the Whitefish River from non-point source pollution, and protect the water quality and beneficial uses of Whitefish Lake.

Protecting our lake will come at a cost, and it is the committee's goal to explore all available options to reduce the economic burden on the community.

— *Andy Feury and Denise Hanson, Community Members-at-Large*

Show Your Support For Our Troops!

The Ladies Auxiliary of Whitefish VFW Post 276 is taking over where US Troop Fund left off. In a combined effort we will continue to support our Troops overseas, and Wounded Warriors in need.

Shipping to Troops in Afghanistan begins in January, and we need supplies. We will be sending supplies to 70 Troops, including our National Guard 495th Combat Sustainment Battalion, and they've requested a few items. This week we are asking for the following donations.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

Toys for Tots

Professional Therapy Associates will be holding a Toys for Tots charity event at all of their clinics on Wednesday Dec. 12 from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. The PTA team

will also be donating gifts. Clinics are at 1234 Whitefish Stage Rd. in Kalispell; 1250 Baker Ave. in Whitefish (inside The WAVE); and at 1850 9th St. West in Columbia Falls (inside the Columbia Falls Clinic next to Super One.)

TACORI



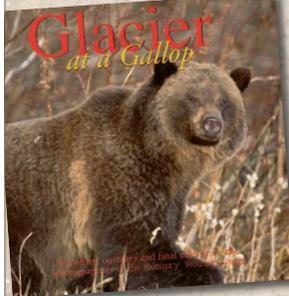
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