

FINAL



STRATEGIC PLAN GALLATIN LOCAL WATER QUALITY DISTRICT FISCAL YEARS 2020 – 2024

PREPARED FOR GALLATIN LOCAL WATER QUALITY DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BY TAMMY SWINNEY, DISTRICT MANAGER

Approved: March 7, 2019

MISSION

To protect, preserve, and improve the quality of groundwater and surface water within the District.”

While the District’s mission statement is focused on water quality, water quantity is directly related to water quality and is also considered.

VALUES

- Strive for competent, knowledgeable stewardship of our water resources.
- Practice transparent and accountable service.
- Maintain a culture of service and integrity.
- Collaborate with partners and our community to preserve, protect, and improve water quality.
- Communicate water quality and water resource information to the public.

APPROVAL

The Gallatin Local Water Quality District Board of Directors adopted this strategic plan by motion at the March 7, 2019 meeting of the Board of Directors.

AMENDMENTS

There are currently no amendments to the Fiscal Year 2020-2024 Strategic Plan.

PURPOSE

The strategic plan serves as a tool to provide long-range guidance to the Gallatin Local Water Quality District Board of Directors and staff for the next five years (July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2024). The plan is focused on achieving the District’s mission based on long-range goals and objectives. Annual work plans are developed from the objectives and strategies outlined in this strategic plan.

The Board recognizes that new objectives may be identified during the five-year period of this strategic plan, and some objectives listed may be removed or postponed based on new information, budget limitations, and staff workload. Any amendments to the strategic plan will be made by Board motion and documented in the Amendments section.

DISTRICT BACKGROUND

Creation

The Gallatin County Commission created the Gallatin Local Water Quality District on December 5, 1995, by Resolution No. 1995-55. A Gallatin Local Water Quality District Program Application was submitted to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) on April 25, 1997. Based on review of the Program Application and an Environmental Assessment completed by MDEQ, the State of Montana Board of Environmental Review approved the Gallatin Local Water Quality District on June 20, 1997.

District Boundary

The District is in the middle portion of Gallatin County and covers an area of 1,299 square miles (**Figure 1**). The District includes the municipalities of Belgrade, Bozeman, and Manhattan, along with the unincorporated areas of Four Corners and Gallatin Gateway. In 2010, the Board approved resolutions to expand the District boundary to include the unincorporated areas of Amsterdam, Churchill, Big Sky, and Logan.

Board of Directors

The District administration was originally contained within the Environmental Health Division of the Gallatin City-County Health Department and governed by the Gallatin City-County Board of Health, with the addition of one Board member from the Gallatin Conservation District, and representatives from the City Councils of Bozeman, Belgrade, and Manhattan. In 1999, the District was reorganized to reflect its non-regulatory framework and is now a separate Department within Gallatin County. It is governed by a dedicated board of directors consisting of members selected as required by Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 7-13-4516.

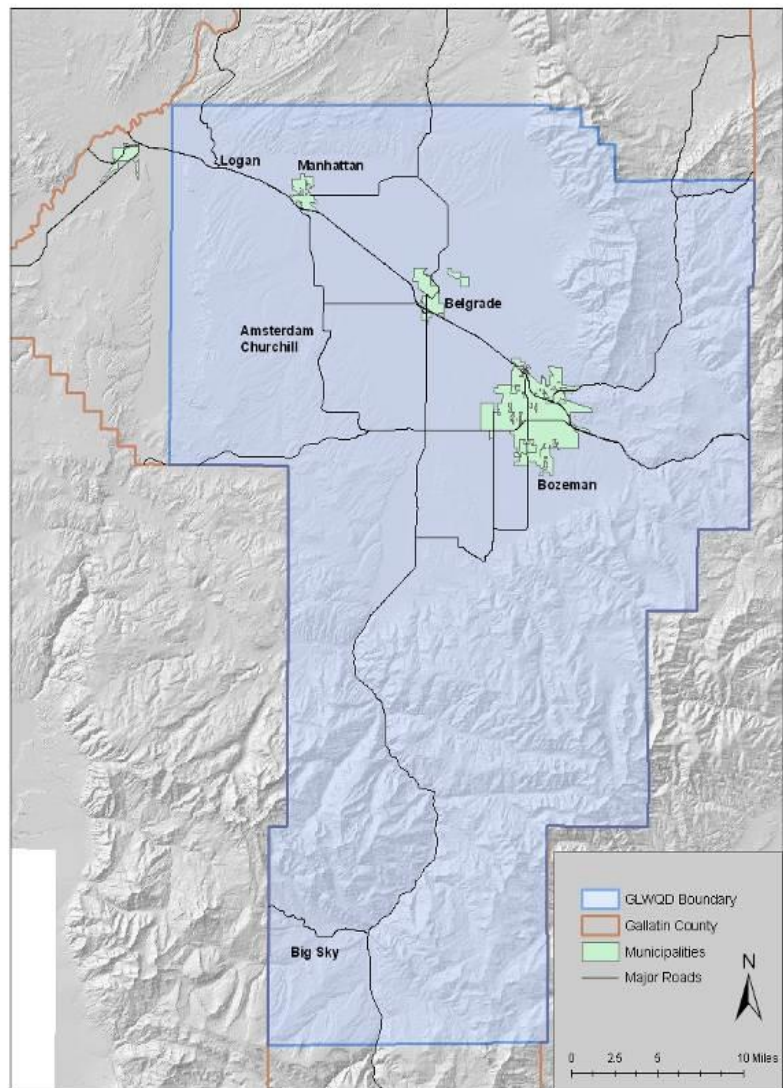


Figure 1. Location of the Gallatin Local Water Quality District which covers 1,299 square miles within Gallatin County. The District includes the municipalities of Belgrade, Bozeman, and Manhattan, and the unincorporated communities of Amsterdam, Churchill, Four Corners, Gallatin Gateway, Logan, and the Gallatin County portion of Big Sky.

The Board of Directors consists of elected officials and appointed representatives for the following:

- ❖ Gallatin County Commission
- ❖ Gallatin Conservation District
- ❖ Gallatin City-County Board of Health
- ❖ Bozeman City Commission
- ❖ City of Bozeman At-Large
- ❖ Belgrade City Council
- ❖ City of Belgrade At-Large
- ❖ Manhattan Town Council
- ❖ Town of Manhattan At-Large

Board Liaisons

While no municipalities were included in the three expansion areas approved by the Board in 2010, several non-voting representatives participate and provide valuable input at board meetings. Liaisons have been appointed that represent the Gallatin City-County Health Department Environmental Health Services, the Gallatin County Planning Board, the Gallatin County Department of Planning and Community Development, and the Big Sky area At-Large.

Staff

District staff consists of three full-time employees: District Manager, Water Quality Specialist/Hydrogeologist, and Water Quality Technician Specialist. Temporary employees and interns may be brought on board to assist with various projects and activities. In recent years, the District has co-hosted several Big Sky Watershed Corps/AmeriCorps Members.

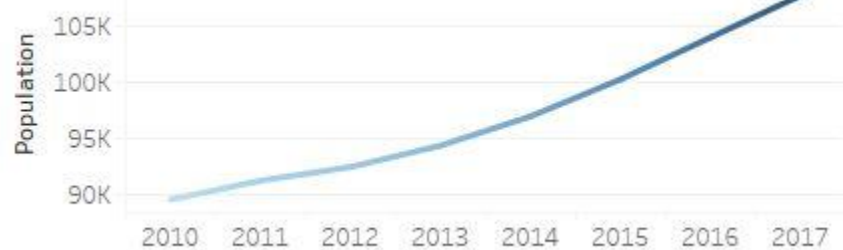
Funding

As a special district within Gallatin County government, the GLWQD is self-sustaining and does not receive funding through the County's General Fund. Revenue comes from fees assessed on improved properties within the District boundary. Improved properties are known as Fee Assessed Units and the fee is assessed annually on property tax bills. This fee is a flat rate and is not connected to property taxable values. Each Fee Assessed Unit is \$6.60 per year.

Population Growth

Gallatin County is the fastest growing county in Montana. According to the US Census data, Gallatin County had a population of 89,513 in 2010. Population estimates compiled by the Montana Department of Commerce Census and Economic Information Center for 2017 were 107,810. This is a stark contrast to earlier

projections for a population of 98,815 in 2017 (www.ceic.mt.gov). The demand for services and increased pressure placed on water resources will present a growing challenge for the District in the next five years.



PROGRAM APPROACH

District Service

The District's general philosophy is to be a place where citizens can receive satisfactory answers to questions related to water resource issues. We will strive to be a clearinghouse for information, and assist citizens with contacting other agencies and organizations as needed. This same level of service will be extended to local groups, organizations, and governmental agencies.

Watershed Perspective

Water resources do not adhere to property or political boundaries. Therefore, to aid in meeting the District's mission, programs and activities are best based on a watershed perspective. Using this approach, the flow system is viewed as an interconnected whole rather than focusing on groundwater and surface water features as separate resources.

Non-Regulatory Focus

The District was created as a non-regulatory entity and does not administer or enforce any local governmental ordinances, rules, or regulations, pertaining to water quality. According to the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM), which govern the formation and operation of local water quality districts (ARM 17.30.1807), the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) may request a district enforce provisions of the Montana Water Quality Act (MCA 75-5-605), for particular violations. Alternatively, per ARM 17.30.1807, a district may request enforcement authority from DEQ in a particular case specified under this rule. In this instance, if a significant water quality issue warrants the action, the District Board of Directors, with concurrence from the Gallatin County Commission, could make this request to DEQ. It should be noted that this statutory authority has never been pursued since the District was formed in 1995. There are no current plans to pursue this authority and direct District involvement in enforcement of regulations developed by federal, state, or local governmental agencies is not anticipated.

The District may be indirectly involved in regulatory issues by providing information, data, technical assistance, or comments to other agencies or organizations, when the regulatory issue(s) pertain to water resources within the District; and the regulatory activities may have an impact on the District's mission to protect, preserve, and improve water quality. While District programs do not include development of local regulations, this does not preclude other agencies or interested organizations from developing regulations based on data or information collected by the District.

When local citizens reach out to District staff with valid complaints regarding water-related issues, staff will provide citizens with contact information for the appropriate local, state, or federal agencies responsible for enforcement of regulations designed to protect water resources. If data collected by the District indicates that water resources are threatened by activities that appear to be in violation of existing rules or regulations enforced by other agencies, the District will notify the enforcing agency of the concerns and provide any existing data requested by the enforcing agency. However, the District will not specifically collect data for an enforcement agency related to a specific potential violation.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

During the next five years, District efforts will be focused on meeting the objectives for each goal in the strategic plan. Specific strategies have been identified to meet each objective. Annual work plans will be developed from the objectives and strategies in this strategic plan. They will be identified through a prioritization exercise by the Board and will guide annual budget development by the District Manager.

PRIORITY AREA – EDUCATION, OUTREACH, AND COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE

GOAL: IMPROVE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL WATER QUALITY, WATER RESOURCES, AND THE DISTRICT

Increase public awareness and understanding of the importance of protecting water resources within the District by conducting educational programs and pursuing partnerships whenever possible to prevent duplication of effort.

OBJECTIVE 1. Provide water education opportunities to youth

Strategies:

- ❖ Develop lesson plans to be used with the Groundwater Flow Model and the Enviroscope Model for conducting educational activities.
- ❖ Explore opportunities to enhance educational programs on local water quality topics in schools through partnerships with Project WET, the Montana State University Master of Science in Science Education degree program, and/or other local educators.
- ❖ Coordinate and staff the water cycle curriculum station at the Gallatin Valley Farm Fair.
- ❖ Conduct water-related activities, as requested, at local schools, summer camps, and educational festivals.

OBJECTIVE 2. Enhance community awareness of local water quality and water quantity trends

Strategies:

- ❖ Incorporate citizen scientists in the Gallatin Stream Teams Program into the District's surface water monitoring network through annual training and monitoring opportunities.
- ❖ Produce and distribute the State of the Waters Report.
- ❖ Conduct Well Awareness Courses annually.
- ❖ Coordinate with Environmental Health Services to staff their booth at Music on Main.
- ❖ Develop a water quality index (DNRC Watershed Management Grant) for use with the District's surface water (and potentially groundwater) network that will be accessible on the District website and in other outreach materials.
- ❖ Provide educational seminars, workshops, and activities in collaboration with other organizations and agencies where possible.
- ❖ Conduct pre- and post-attendee surveys at workshops to measure education effectiveness.
- ❖ Evaluate existing education and outreach materials to ensure relevancy.

OBJECTIVE 3. Develop and deepen community relationships that will sustain existing and drive new projects that improve water quality

Strategies:

- ❖ Partner with the Greater Gallatin Watershed Council Watershed Stewards Program.
- ❖ Collaborate with EHS to develop local tools that encourage septic system maintenance.
- ❖ Continue to serve as the local facilitator for the Montana State University Extension Water Quality Well Educated Program.
- ❖ Participate in the Gallatin River Task Force Healthy Headwaters Initiative.
- ❖ Engage Gallatin Conservation District participation in District water monitoring activities.
- ❖ Implement the Gallatin Watershed Network to foster information sharing across a broad-spectrum of local natural resource professionals.

OBJECTIVE 4. Provide technical assistance on water quality to decision makers and stakeholders

Strategies:

- ❖ Conduct subdivision reviews, as requested by the County Planning Department following the District's Subdivision Review Policy.
- ❖ Review status reports for existing Superfund sites and advocate for effective remediation, as needed.
- ❖ Engage in collaborative activities with local organizations, committees, and work groups where District expertise is requested.

OBJECTIVE 5. Increase awareness of District Services, Mission, and Value in the Community

Strategies:

- ❖ Improve and expand resources on the District website.
- ❖ Collaborate with the Gallatin County Communications Coordinator to explore ways to optimize the District's presence in the community.
- ❖ Install signage at high visibility surface water monitoring stations promoting the District's water quality data collection efforts.
- ❖ Participate in annual state-wide Local Water Quality District meetings.
- ❖ Prepare annual reports highlighting District services and activities accomplished, and identify opportunities to share with the public.

PRIORITY AREA – MONITORING AND RESEARCH OF WATER RESOURCES

GOAL: COLLECT AND ANALYZE WATER DATA AND IMPLEMENT MONITORING PROJECTS THAT EVALUATE, PROTECT, AND IMPROVE LONG-TERM WATER QUALITY

Conduct groundwater and surface water monitoring and research activities that can be used to establish baseline data needs, evaluate long-term trends in water quality and quantity, and assess water quality issues of concern. The District will use data collected to support decisions and the prioritization of on-the-ground activities. Projects and activities may be undertaken by the District in partnership with other agencies and organizations.

OBJECTIVE 1. Sustain and improve data collection activities in the District-wide water monitoring networks

Strategies:

- ❖ Operate the groundwater monitoring network as outlined in the District's long-term plan.
- ❖ Operate the surface water monitoring network as outlined in the District's quality assurance project plan.
- ❖ Identify areas in the District where additional groundwater monitoring wells and surface water monitoring stations could improve data coverage and seek opportunities to secure access to incorporate into the networks.

OBJECTIVE 2. Conduct and participate in objective-based research to assess emerging community water quality issues

Strategies:

- ❖ Continue groundwater nutrient monitoring in Big Sky following the approved Meadow Village Water Quality Sampling Plan.
- ❖ Explore opportunities and partnerships to investigate cumulative impacts to water quality from nonpoint source pollution sources in the Gallatin Valley and/or site-specific areas.
- ❖ Assist in the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology Groundwater Investigation Program Big Sky-Gallatin Canyon Project
- ❖ Incorporate opportunities in District staff work plans to analyze datasets; assess and identify water quality issues of concern that can lead to future research and monitoring efforts.

OBJECTIVE 3. Support, assess, and implement projects that protect and improve water quality

Strategies:

- ❖ Explore opportunities to partner with the local organizations on stream restoration projects.
- ❖ Work with partners to identify possible solutions to improve water quality in areas of concern.

PRIORITY AREA – INFORMATION COLLECTION AND DISSEMINATION

GOAL: COMPILE, STORE, AND DISSEMINATE WATER QUALITY DATA AND INFORMATION

Water resource information generated by the District and other agencies and organizations is collected, organized, stored and made available to the public. This includes sharing information and water resources data among citizens, organizations, and governmental agencies to improve understanding and management of water resources in the District.

OBJECTIVE 1. Compile, store, analyze, and interpret water data to assess and prioritize water quality issues

Strategies:

- ❖ Populate and maintain water quality data from District groundwater projects and the MSU Well Educated Program in the District's Groundwater Database.
- ❖ Work with the GIS Department to create a District Surface Water Database.
- ❖ Collaborate with the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology to develop and implement a procedure for uploading continuous stream flow and water quality data into Surface Water Assessment and Monitoring Program (SWAMP) database.
- ❖ Utilize existing county, state, and federal databases to serve as repositories for District-collected data (GWIC, SWAMP, MT WQX, EPA STORET).

OBJECTIVE 2. Make water data publicly available and accessible

Strategies:

- ❖ Prepare, print, and distribute the 'Gallatin State of the Waters Report' by the end of Fiscal Year 2021.
- ❖ Develop, publish, and maintain a GLWQD Interactive Mapper that will be accessible to the public via the District and County websites in coordination with the GIS Department.
- ❖ Publish the surface water quality health index results on the District website.

OBJECTIVE 3. Adaptive Management strategies are incorporated into District Monitoring Networks

Strategies:

- ❖ Long-term groundwater and surface water monitoring plans are reviewed and modified in response to information and data that is collected and analyzed.

PRIORITY AREA – ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND QUALITY SERVICE

GOAL: MAINTAIN SUSTAINABILITY OF THE DISTRICT’S ACTIVITIES AND SERVE THE RAPIDLY GROWING GALLATIN COMMUNITY

Providing quality service within budget limitations coupled with projected increasing demand for services in the next five years requires the District to be proactive in our efforts to respond successfully. Establishment of the District’s surface water monitoring network and efforts to expand and improve the groundwater monitoring network require significant staffing capacity. These signature long-term monitoring programs are essential for tracking trends in water quality and understanding impacts to these water resources.

OBJECTIVE 1. District fee and budgetary structure support organizational goals

Strategies:

- ❖ Work with the Treasurer’s Office to ensure the District Fee is being applied appropriately and accurately for all Fee Assessed Units within the District boundary.
- ❖ Evaluate revenue-expenditure projections during annual budget process.
- ❖ Prepare work plans that include budgets for all proposed new monitoring projects.
- ❖ Develop and implement a Capital and General Equipment Replacement Plan.

OBJECTIVE 2. Ensure team member capacity aligns with District workload

Strategies:

- ❖ Develop a process for tracking hours spent on projects/activities and implement within the first year of this strategic plan.
- ❖ Include estimates of effort and expenses for projects/activities in annual work plans.
- ❖ Identify methods, applications, and/or software that could streamline data analysis.

OBJECTIVE 3. Encourage professional development

Strategies:

- ❖ Provide opportunities for continuing education.
- ❖ Set yearly performance measures through individual work plans that align with District annual work plans.
- ❖ Continue regular individual team member meetings.

LONG RANGE PLANNING

It is important for the District to identify emerging water quality issues and respond appropriately to perceived water quality concerns as the Gallatin community continues to evolve. During the implementation of this strategic plan over the next five years, the District will explore ways to gauge community concerns about water resources. Examples include working with the County Communications Coordinator and reviewing community plans and reports (i.e., A Seat at the Table Summary Report) developed through extensive public input. The District can utilize this information to identify opportunities for District action and involvement that can be incorporated into future strategic plans.