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### Press Release

#### Wastewater Monitoring for COVID-19 in Big Sky

The Gallatin City-County Health Department has received a \$79,696 grant from the Big Sky Relief Fund to help fund COVID-19 wastewater surveillance in Big Sky.

The money will be used as part of an agreement between Gallatin County and Montana State University to have an MSU study team test the levels of COVID-19 in the wastewater in the Big Sky Water and Sewer District.

Samples are expected to be collected weekly. Results will be provided to the GCCHD to help monitor COVID-19 trends. This data will be used to monitor the levels of the virus coming from the Big Sky area and to determine if levels are trending up or down.

The Big Sky Relief Fund was created by the Big Sky Resort Area District (BSRAD) in partnership with Yellowstone Club Community Foundation, Moonlight Community Foundation, and Spanish Peaks Community Foundation. The effort has committed over \$2 million in COVID-19 relief for individuals and families, small businesses, nonprofits and government agencies.

“Monitoring for virus load in wastewater provides us with one more way to understand how the virus is or is not spreading in the community,” said Matt Kelley, Health Officer with Gallatin City-County Health Department. “This data will help us make decisions about how to navigate through the pandemic.”

“Partners in Big Sky will continue to coordinate closely and work towards solutions that minimize the impacts of COVID-19 in Gallatin County. The project is certainly a tool in the toolkit to support data-driven decision-making,” said BSRAD Executive Director Daniel Bierschwale.

“BSRAD is extremely appreciative for the exemplary efforts throughout Gallatin County from Emergency Management, medical providers, and Health Department officials. We are thankful to be partners in fighting COVID-19 in Gallatin County,” said BSRAD Vice President Sarah Blechta.

“We are happy to be a partner with MSU, BSRAD, and the Health Department on this COVID-19 study. Big Sky is a good choice because of the variety of visitation we receive and how COVID-19 could impact operators as well as the general public,” said Ron Edwards, General Manager of the Big Sky County Water and Sewer District.



Similar testing has also been occurring at the Wiedenheft Laboratory in Bozeman using samples from the Bozeman Water Reclamation Facility.

The Gallatin City-County Health Department Call Center is open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to answer questions about COVID-19. Reach the Call Center by phone at 406-548-0123 or email at [callcenter@readygallatin.com](mailto:callcenter@readygallatin.com).

The most accurate local source of information remains the GCCHD website <https://www.healthygallatin.org/coronavirus-covid-19/>.

