

December 14, 2023

RE: Hamlet of Blackfoot – Wastewater Treatment Upgrade Project

Dear County Resident,

The County of Vermilion River (the "County") has initiated a project to upgrade the Hamlet of Blackfoot's wastewater treatment system and is providing information to landowners and residents of the Hamlet of Blackfoot regarding the progress and information to better understand the project.

The wastewater treatment project for the Hamlet consists of additional storage capacities at the lagoon and seasonal discharge to surface waters. The additional storage capacities that will be added to the treatment process include a facultative cell and increased treated waters storage until seasonal release.

The treatment process for a lagoon includes many steps and longer accommodation than that of many private septic systems. These steps of Anaerobic, Facultative and 12-month storage all provide an effective system in treating wastewater and used through out the Province of Alberta for many years. This type of treatment system provides a high-quality and reliable treatment of wastewater that meets and can exceed the regulated standards. More information on the Basic Process can be found on the County's project webpage at [Projects: County of Vermilion River \(vermilion-river.com\)](https://www.vermilion-river.com/projects).

The Blackfoot wastewater project has been in the works since early 2017 at which time a public engagement session was held, and information provided to the public and landowners. This project has seen a few design changes, and this update will assist with those revisions. This is one step in the engagement process that Council would like to provide by hosting an Open House on: **January 30th, 2024 from 4:00pm to 7:00pm at the Blackfoot Community Hall.**

The County of Vermilion River has received concerns and comments regarding wastewater and the regulated practice of releasing treated effluent to surface waters. Some of the concerns raised are regarding:

Wastewater Treatment Process

The regulatory process in treatment of wastewater is monitored and governed by the Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (AEPA) branch of the Province of Alberta. Many updates have been implemented since the early 1990's to enhance the treatment of wastewater and to better protect the general public and environment. This includes the testing requirement under the Wastewater Systems Effluent Regulations to ensure higher quality of treated effluent and the addition of another treatment cell will assist in providing treatment.

Fish & Wildlife

The regulating body for fish is the Department of Fisheries and Oceans of Canada, who have been consulted, and a response provided to an application along with the County's Environmental experts' observations. Measures have been identified and will be deployed as

recommended under the projects' Environmental Protection Plan to protect fish and fish habitat as regulated under *Canada's Fisheries Act* and further to protect species at risk under the Aquatic Invasive Species Regulations.

Diversion of Water

Diversion of water is regulated by Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (AEPA) and approvals must be obtained prior to this type of activity occurring. The County of Vermilion River does not regulate activities to or within the bed and shores of lakes, rivers or streams and must seek the same approvals as a landowner. Any unauthorized activity can be reported by a member of the public, landowner or a municipality to AEPA.

Other Lagoon Facilities

The County can not speak for other Lagoon facilities within the County of Vermilion River boundary that are operated by other corporate and non-corporate bodies. The facilities or Lagoons operated by the County for several of the Hamlets within the County of Vermilion River boundary do so under the regulations and approvals of AEPA. Some of you may have been made aware of the seasonal discharge that occurs from the existing Blackfoot Lagoon; these waters are discharged to a large land area southeast of the Hamlet of Blackfoot. Observations this fall (2023), during the seasonal discharge, did not produce obnoxious odours and the lands that the treated waters are currently discharged to are not giving off obnoxious odours within proximity of several residences. There are many other odours that occur within and along a river or stream from natural vegetation composting to animal contributors that may be misleading to the discharge of treated effluent. A listing of type of typical odours associated with lagoons can be reviewed on the webpage for this project.

Other information has been obtained in regard to water quality within the creek and the quality of existing Blackfoot Lagoon that meets or exceeds the regulatory standards before discharging. For more information on this please visit: [Projects: County of Vermilion River \(vermilion-river.com\)](http://Projects: County of Vermilion River (vermilion-river.com)).

The County is providing a sustainable and efficient wastewater system to accommodate future growth of the Hamlet of Blackfoot.

Concerns or comments regarding the Blackfoot wastewater treatment upgrade can be made in writing to the County of Vermilion River by **January 15, 2024** by emailing: blackfootwwproject@county24.com for review and follow-up prior to the Open House on January 30, 2024.

Sincerely,

County of Vermilion River