

Hello Commissioners,

Thank you for taking the time to listen to our valued residents of Big Sky. We hope that this opportunity with local leaders and their constituents all in the same room is insightful and productive. As a representative of the BSOA, I am speaking for more than 2,400 property owners in our jurisdiction. In the past, the BSOA has worked with both Madison and Gallatin County Commissioners to review proposals affecting the Big Sky community, as well as our membership.

Today, I raise concerns about the cumulative impacts that approved developments in Big Sky have thus far imposed on our community and its natural resources; cumulative impacts that remain unaddressed.

Traffic Safety:

Based on input from MDT to both Madison and Gallatin counties, the existing congestion at the US 191 and MT 64 intersection frequently results in a failing level of service during peak seasons. We look forward to the future roadwork being done through the TIGER grant and hope that you will come together to ensure that much-needed improvements are secured for the safety of our residents and visitors. In addition, your review and consideration of any new development should assume a substantial increase of traffic and congestion at proposed turnouts on MT 64 and an increase to the existing congestion at the intersection of MT 64 and US 191. Therefore, the BSOA recommends the appropriate studies be provided to lessen the potential impacts on our community.

Emergency Planning:

It is not a matter of 'if,' but *when* a natural disaster occurs in Big Sky, there is currently no clearly defined emergency evacuation plan for residents and visitors to follow. According to data coming out of the Big Sky Chamber of Commerce, there are 20,000 people here on any given day during peak season. We want to ensure that both counties are working together to prevent a potential mass casualty in Big Sky due to complacent or irresponsible planning, and a lack of adequate emergency egress. We understand that the Chamber is working on emergency evacuation in Big Sky and look forward to cooperating and partnering with them on this effort.

Water Resources:

It is still unclear as to whether the Big Sky area has enough water resources to support the number of proposed developments coming down the pipeline. Water resources in Big Sky are finite. Continuous rapid growth in Big Sky has significantly increased demand for fresh, potable water to meet existing as well as planned development needs. The addition of new user hookups without proven capacity could severely degrade the service provided to a substantial portion of our community. We encourage both counties to take sincere long-term water availability and sustainability into consideration during the review and approval process of any new Big Sky development. To achieve this, it seems appropriate that both counties contract a research institute or other vetted entity to conduct an intentional, comprehensive hydrologic analysis of the greater Big Sky area. We find this to be of utmost importance for the existential longevity of Big Sky. Recognizing that this study would be a costly endeavor, it would require collaboration of both counties and Resort Tax as a potential budget item, for the next fiscal year. The findings of the study should then be adopted into an updated growth policy, which has not been updated since 2013. It would be prudent to not rush development projects until a thorough hydrology study is done.

Natural Resources:

The Middle Fork of the West Fork of the Gallatin River and appurtenant wetlands have been negatively impacted over the last four years due to heavy nitrogen runoff and levels. Section 2 of the Zoning Regulations in Gallatin County clearly state, amongst several purposes: “Promote the preservation of wildlife and fish habitat.” The Middle Fork and South Fork do not currently meet Montana’s water quality standards primarily due to existing nitrogen flow levels. Projects approved by the Planning Board and Commissioners must consider the unambiguous purpose and intent of growth policies and adopted regulations.

With regular unacceptable traffic delays and algae blooms in the streams, among other impacts we are already experiencing, it is obvious that Big Sky is starting to see the signs of overdevelopment. The resources that people come here to enjoy are very finite and fragile. We would ask both county boards to keep that in mind as they review proposals for new developments, and accordingly to demand clear and convincing proof that those new developments will be sustainable and will not negatively impact our resources. Thank you for your time.