

*City of Driggs*  
*Community Project Funding Request FY27*

## Attachment 2

- Support letters and news



# CITY OF DRIGGS

## OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

February 24, 2026

Congressman Mike Simpson ID-02  
1075 S. Utah Ave, Ste 240  
Idaho Falls, ID 83402

Congressman Simpson,

Thank you for taking the time to visit with me last spring in your DC office along with Nikki Wallace and Reilly Lamp. I have also appreciated meeting more recently with Solara Linehan.

The City of Driggs owns and operates the Teton Valley Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant. The city has been attempting to address compliance and violations of its current DEQ discharge permit since upgrades were made in 2013. The violations are due to ammonia limits. The treatment plant discharges into an unnamed stream that flows to Woods Creek and subsequently the Teton River, Snake River and finally to the Columbia. The City of Driggs has been working with the EPA and the Department of Justice to resolve the violations and has made various attempts to try and bring the plant into compliance. Forsgren Associates, an engineering firm hired by the city, completed a facility planning study which was presented at a City Council meeting held November 7, 2023. The City Council voted unanimously to accept the study and its selected solution and move forward with pursuing project funding.

The solution selected to best address the current treatment issues will consist of converting the current lagoons to an activated sludge process. A mechanical treatment plant will be constructed within the footprint of the current property. The total project is estimated to cost \$25,000,000. This is less than originally anticipated due to the City of Victor deciding to build their own wastewater plant. In addition, Driggs is adding on capabilities to reuse our water. Because of the high cost of the upgrades to the treatment plant and limited funds of the City, we are pursuing funding to help our residents and small businesses have a wastewater treatment facility that will meet our needs and bring the plant into compliance. Due to the DOJ Consent Decree, the city is facing additional demands from the EPA including a tight timeframe to be in compliance. This could be cost prohibitive to current and future citizens. Any funding would greatly assist the City in trying to keep the sewer rates as low as possible while still addressing all the issues.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mayor August Christensen



208-354-2362  
M-TH 8:30am - 5pm  
F 8:30am - 1pm



mayor@driggsidaho.org  
DRIGGSIDAHO.ORG



60 South Main Street  
PO Box 48  
Driggs, ID 83422



208 354 3871  
www.tetonwater.org

18 North Main Street, Suite 310  
PO Box 768  
Driggs, Idaho 83422

03/12/2025

Congressman Mike Simpson  
1075 South Utah Avenue, Suite 240  
Idaho Falls, ID 83042

Dear Congressman Simpson,

Friends of the Teton River (FTR) is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) organization started in 2001. Our mission is to work collaboratively with diverse partners for clean water, healthy streams, and a wild trout fishery in the Teton Watershed. FTR uses rigorous science to implement on-the-ground projects and programs that protect and improve water resources, stream channels, flood plains, water availability and supply, fisheries, and water quality, while supporting a multitude of human and ecosystem needs.

FTR along with landowners, state and federal agencies, fish and wildlife managers, local government, and the community at-large, are deeply invested in restoring degraded portions of the Teton River stream corridor, which will benefit the health, welfare, and long-term sustainability of the Teton Watershed community and ecosystem. FTR has worked diligently with and on behalf of these stakeholders since 2001 to develop collaborative solutions to mitigate the potential destruction of homes, businesses, infrastructure, and habitat in our small community.

FTR has worked closely with the City of Driggs on numerous watershed protection and stream restoration projects over the past two decades. The City has been a leader and partner in numerous other community projects with a water resources nexus, including previous upgrades and management of the Wastewater Treatment Plant, floodplain and drinking water protections, and in strategic and community water resource planning.

FTR fully supports the City of Driggs in this grant application. In addition, FTR is committed to providing the City with any available data and expertise that we can provide to ensure a successful outcome on behalf of our community. Please contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

Amy Verbeten  
Executive Director, Friends of the Teton River  
[amy@tetonwater.org](mailto:amy@tetonwater.org)  
(208)354-3871 x 13

**From:** [Jess Byrne](#)  
**To:** [Jamie Neill](#)  
**Cc:** [Darren Damon](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Driggs Project  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Jamie—

We think Driggs would be a great candidate for funding. Below is some information regarding their situation. Please let me know if you need more details.

Thanks,

Jess

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**From:** Mary Anne Nelson <[mary.anne.nelson@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:mary.anne.nelson@deq.idaho.gov)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 4, 2025 11:41 AM  
**To:** William Teuscher <[William.Teuscher@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:William.Teuscher@deq.idaho.gov)>; Jess Byrne <[Jess.Byrne@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:Jess.Byrne@deq.idaho.gov)>; Jerri Henry <[Jerri.Henry@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:Jerri.Henry@deq.idaho.gov)>; MaryAnna Peavey <[MaryAnna.Peavey@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:MaryAnna.Peavey@deq.idaho.gov)>; Troy Saffle <[Troy.Saffle@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:Troy.Saffle@deq.idaho.gov)>; Carlin Feisthamel <[Carlin.Feisthamel@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:Carlin.Feisthamel@deq.idaho.gov)>  
**Cc:** Tiffany Floyd <[Tiffany.Floyd@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:Tiffany.Floyd@deq.idaho.gov)>  
**Subject:** RE: Driggs Project

We would be supportive for Driggs. Willie summary is spot on. The city, EPA, and DEQ signed the settlement agreement and the city will now be responsible for the upgrades. We continue to work with them but given the current and potential future state of the Clean Water SRF, I don't know that we'll have much to give.

Signature  


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**From:** William Teuscher <[William.Teuscher@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:William.Teuscher@deq.idaho.gov)>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 31, 2025 11:31 AM  
**To:** Jess Byrne <[Jess.Byrne@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:Jess.Byrne@deq.idaho.gov)>; Jerri Henry <[Jerri.Henry@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:Jerri.Henry@deq.idaho.gov)>; MaryAnna Peavey <[MaryAnna.Peavey@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:MaryAnna.Peavey@deq.idaho.gov)>; Troy Saffle <[Troy.Saffle@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:Troy.Saffle@deq.idaho.gov)>; Carlin Feisthamel <[Carlin.Feisthamel@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:Carlin.Feisthamel@deq.idaho.gov)>  
**Cc:** Mary Anne Nelson <[mary.anne.nelson@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:mary.anne.nelson@deq.idaho.gov)>; Tiffany Floyd <[Tiffany.Floyd@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:Tiffany.Floyd@deq.idaho.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: Driggs Project

They are currently beginning the design phase. They are looking to construct an MBR plant. The last estimates I have heard from their engineer is around \$30-\$35 million. Forsgren Associates is their engineer on the project.

Willie

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**From:** Jamie Neill <[jamie.neill@gov.idaho.gov](mailto:jamie.neill@gov.idaho.gov)>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 31, 2025 9:08 AM  
**To:** Jess Byrne <[Jess.Byrne@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:Jess.Byrne@deq.idaho.gov)>  
**Cc:** Darren Damon <[Darren.Damon@gov.idaho.gov](mailto:Darren.Damon@gov.idaho.gov)>  
**Subject:** Driggs Project

Do you have any info on the wastewater project Driggs is looking at? They are applying for a Simpson earmark and they will want to know DEQ's perspective.

Thanks!

**Jamie Neill**

Policy Director  
Idaho Governor Brad Little  
208-854-3022 desk  
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[Jamie.Neill@gov.idaho.gov](mailto:Jamie.Neill@gov.idaho.gov)

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# CITY OF DRIGGS

## EXPANSION AND MAJOR UPGRADES TO TVRWR FACILITY



**Published:** January, 15 2025

[updated 1/23/25: Public Comment Period now open]

# CITY OF DRIGGS ANNOUNCES EXPANSION AND MAJOR UPGRADES TO TETON VALLEY REGIONAL WATER RECLAMATION FACILITY



### EPA Agreement Sets Path for Environmental Improvements and Sustainable Growth

The City of Driggs is taking significant steps to expand and upgrade the Teton Valley Regional Water Reclamation Facility, also known as the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP), as part of an agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Justice (DOJ). This consent decree outlines a clear path for Driggs to modernize its wastewater system, enhance water quality protections, and ensure long-term compliance with the Clean Water Act.

Over the next four years, the City of Driggs will implement an expansion and upgrade of its TVRWRF along with additional remedies reflecting the city's commitment to environmental responsibility and public stewardship.

“Driggs is not alone in this matter. Small towns across the country need 25+ million dollar upgrades for treatment facilities due to aging infrastructure,” Mayor August Christensen stated. “By expanding and upgrading our wastewater system, we’re preparing for the growth of our community while protecting our natural resources. This is an investment in our future, and we want our community to know that we are doing everything we can to find funding mechanisms to offset the costs for the bottom line - our utility bill.”

By January 2029, the Teton Valley Regional Water Reclamation Facility will transition to an advanced Activated Sludge Process with Membranes system. This upgrade will utilize existing infrastructure and incorporate new systems, including equalization basins, membrane bioreactors, and biosolids handling facilities, to meet future needs.

To address pollution control and monitoring, the City will increase sampling for incoming wastewater, industrial discharges, and lagoon effluent. Additionally, updated plans for lagoon management, odor control, and sewage sludge handling will be implemented.

The City is also focusing on workforce development, aiming to establish a long-term staffing plan by January 2026. This plan will ensure the expanded facility is adequately staffed and equipped to maintain compliance with environmental regulations.

Efforts to identify and repair excessive inflow and infiltration into the wastewater collection system will continue annually, particularly during periods of high groundwater. Transparency and accountability are key priorities, with the City committing to increased reporting to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on progress, sampling results, and compliance measures. The City’s website will also provide regular updates and access to related documents.

The City will fulfill its obligations by paying a significantly reduced amount of \$400,000 in penalties to the U.S. government compared to the \$160 million sought originally. Additionally, it will prioritize public health and safety by promptly notifying the community of any unanticipated discharges or environmental risks.

With the current WWTP nearing capacity, these steps aim to ensure long-term compliance and highlight Driggs' dedication to improving its infrastructure and safeguarding the community’s water quality.

We encourage our community to stay informed and engaged as we work to complete these upgrades. Visit the [WWTP webpage](#) for updates and FAQs.

Read [the full Consent Decree online](#), [the Amended Complaint](#), [the Complaint Appendix A](#), and [the Notice of Lodging](#). A [Federal Register Notice](#) was filed Wednesday, January 22, 2025 opening a public comment period for 30 days until 2/21/25. Commenting information and all filings are online with [justice.gov](#). Additional information and project updates are available on the city's [WWTP webpage](#).

Additional media inquiries can be directed to Mayor August Christensen by emailing [mayor@driggsidaho.org](mailto:mayor@driggsidaho.org).

[← Public Meeting: 01/22/25 Planning & Zoning Commission](#)



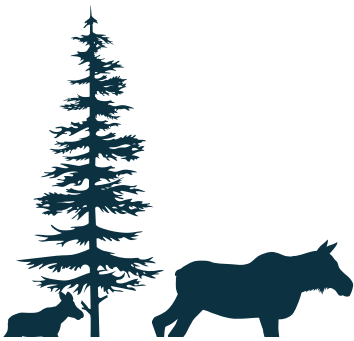
## CONTACT INFO

### City Hall

60 South Main Street

P.O. Box 48

Driggs, ID 83422



# CITY OF DRIGGS

## WASTE WATER TREATMENT PLANT LAWSUIT WILL ULTIMATELY HELP THE CITY OF DRIGGS



**Published:** October, 24 2022

For Immediate Release: October 24, 2022

Contact: Mayor August Christensen,  
mayor@driggsidaho.org

### Waste Water Treatment Plant Lawsuit Will Ultimately Help The City Of Driggs



DRIGGS - The Wastewater Treatment Plant

(WWTP) in the City of Driggs is out of compliance with its National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPEDS) permit. The NPEDS permit is issued under the Clean Water Act by the Environmental Protection Agency. As a result of the current facility's inability to meet the allowed levels of ammonia in treated water discharged from the plant consistently, the judicial branch of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Justice, has filed a lawsuit against the City of Driggs to help bring the plant into compliance.

“Although it seems scary to be sued by the Department of Justice, it's actually an opportunity to receive support and resources from the Federal Government. We want to make sure that any future decisions for our WWTP are the absolute best decisions and that all results create a fully functioning plant for decades to come,” states Mayor August Christensen. “We have a series of meetings planned with the EPA to bring them up to speed on all aspects of our plant,” she adds.

The EPA is currently reviewing the WWTP Draft Facility Plan to consider the best possible solutions. City officials and Staff will meet with the EPA to discuss in-depth technical issues later this month. After the EPA's review, a new WWTP Facility Plan will be presented to City Council and sent to the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality for review. Once a new facility plan is adopted, steps will be taken to resolve the problem within a set timeline.

City of Driggs Attorney Sam Angell states, “Yes, a lawsuit has been filed. We've known this is coming. This is a procedural step in the process of getting to a consent decree which is a

settlement agreement between the EPA and the City of Driggs to solve the problem. This is part of months of work with the EPA to find solutions.”

“The facility typically removes 90-95% of the BOD, TSS, and E.Coli, which is significantly more than required,” City Engineer Jay Mazalewski explains. “Unfortunately, the treatment facility cannot remove enough ammonia to meet our stringent discharge requirements. I have spent the last five years working with engineers, manufacturers, regulatory agencies, and laboratories, trying to solve the ammonia issue. Working with the EPA is the next step in the process of coming up with a long-term solution,” he remarks.

The City of Driggs is cooperating with the Department of Justice and EPA to resolve this issue. Read more details on the matter and FAQs about the WWTP online at [DriggsIdaho.org/wwtp](https://driggsidaho.org/wwtp). This webpage will be updated as more information becomes available. -END-

[< Public Hearing Notice for City Council Meeting on May 17th](#)  
[Neighborhood Meeting Aug 30th: Flats at Teton Peaks Subdivision >](#)

## CONTACT INFO

### City Hall

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Driggs, ID 83422

[https://www.tetonvalleynews.net/community/driggs-city-council-chooses-future-plan-for-wastewater-treatment-plant/article\\_ce5cb8cc-825f-11ee-86a0-63c04e0986dc.html](https://www.tetonvalleynews.net/community/driggs-city-council-chooses-future-plan-for-wastewater-treatment-plant/article_ce5cb8cc-825f-11ee-86a0-63c04e0986dc.html)

## Driggs City Council chooses future plan for wastewater treatment plant

Danielle Clegg  
Nov 15, 2023



The sun shines on the Driggs Wastewater Treatment Plant located southwest of town along Bates Rd.

By Connor Shea

In the regular meeting last Wednesday, Driggs City Council unanimously voted to adopt the wastewater treatment plan that would convert the current plant into an activated sludge process.

Listed as Alternative 4, the activated sludge process was deemed and recommended the best option by Forsgren Associates, Inc. as the engineers who have studied this for the past two years.

"I am glad that the council made the decision to choose option number 4," said Mayor August Christensen. "I feel that it has the ability to have additions down the line to bring the grade or class of water up to be a higher class than what is actually mandated. If the future of Driggs wanted to work on reusing this water in parks and water you have to have a higher class. Our community has voiced that that is really important for them."



This plan also has the ability to expand, which based on the estimates presented for growth in Driggs, could be anywhere from a 2-6% increase in population by 2040, causing the need for a new system anyway.

Community members present were concerned about the size and the reliability of the system. Forsgren Associates, Inc. engineer Dave Noel responded that the design phase will allow for more variance in how much growth they plan on building for and that this type of system is commonly used.

According Noel, the current system design (fixed-film) used in Driggs is the oldest type around. However, the activated sludge process is merely an enhancement with the same bacteria used in the fixed-film system. The new process keeps the bacteria and contaminants together longer so the bacteria can break down contaminants over a longer period of time, leaving the wastewater cleaner.

"A wastewater treatment plant is a living, working organism as you take living waste and cultivate bacteria and break down the waste," explained Noel in the meeting. "Separate the solids from the liquids so that the bacteria in the system breaks down the contaminates from the water in the sewage."

The activated sludge process design has been around for about 100 years and has been the most popular in the last 50 years.

However, other cold-weather towns in the Rockies use or will be using the activated sludge process plant such as Soda Springs, Rigby, Rexburg, Idaho Falls, Yellowstone, and Island Park.

Noel presented all options with the initial costs and the projected costs for the prospective wastewater plant in order for it to be in compliance with the ammonia output from the plant.

The activated sludge process plant will cost around \$25,502,000 million; however, it did have a lower cost for the maintenance of the plant in the future. Noel reported that this plant will require more staff than is currently serving at the plant.

"We did increase our sewer bill this last budget session because we knew we were going to do this," explained Mayor Christensen. "People are realizing this now, and we have to be responsible. We all need to pay for things we need in the city."

"We are also going towards lots of grants for this," continued Mayor Christensen. "My hope is that we get a very large amount of funding. We have right now in this budget session \$3 million to go to this, especially to this interim project which is projected to be around \$6 million. That's a really good first step."

The city has already signed a contract to get someone on the hunt for grants and has been in contact with some of the congressional delegates to be able to tune into federal infrastructure money that is available.

Noel identified the current issues the plant is facing if left as is, the first being that the output is exceeding permit limits, primarily for ammonia. The second involves that the consent order dealing has passed. The plant is also nearing capacity for flow and load which led the city council to have to make a decision on how to proceed with the treatment process.

Alternative 4 made the most sense for the city council as they mentioned it has the most capacity to expand in the future and costs less to maintain.

For the interim solution, 1/3 of the existing media basins will be removed. Modifications will be made so that membranes in the water flow are added. Membranes will be the filter for the system for at least the interim period to get the process going as quickly as possible to get the plant in compliance. The interim solution is projected to take 15 months after the design has been approved.

The long-term building that will take multiple years will include constructing biosolids handling facilities with dewatering units, conveyors, and roll-off bins. A building is also on the agenda as it will help hold in heat to make the bacteria system more efficient when temperatures drop and heated water must be maintained as water temperature is the biggest concern.

Because Driggs holds the permit, they are making the decision on which plan will go into action; however, the City of Victor has been involved in ongoing communication and has been aware of decisions.

This plan will be sent to the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) for their approval before going to the design phase.

For a full comprehensive study from Forsgren Associates, Inc., see the city council agenda for Nov. 7, 2023.

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Danielle Clegg