From:	Suplee, Mike
To:	Laidlaw, Tina
Subject:	Updated DEQ-12, guidance
Date:	Wednesday, September 25, 2013 12:25:48 PM
Attachments:	Ntrnts_DEQ12_Guidance.zzz

Hi Tina;
These are the most recent updates, reflecting comments from the League, general cleanup, and better organization.
-Mike

Montana Department of
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR

DEQ-12, PARTS A and B

Montana Base Numeric Nutrient Standards and Nutrient Standards Variances

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This circular contains information pertaining to the base numeric nutrients standards (§75-5-103[2], MCA) and their implementation. It is divided into **Parts A** and **B**. **Part A** contains the water quality standards including concentration limits, where they apply, and their period of application. **Part A** is adopted by the Board of Environmental Review under its rulemaking authority in §75-5-301(2), MCA.

Part B contains information about variances from the base numeric nutrient standards. This includes effluent treatment requirements associated with general nutrient standards variances, as well as effluent treatment requirements for individual nutrient standards variances and to whom these apply. Unlike **Part A**, **Part B** is not adopted by the Board of Environmental Review; **Part B** is adopted by the Department following its formal rule making process, pursuant to §75-5-313, MCA.

The Department has reviewed a considerable amount of scientific literature and has carried out scientific research on its own in order to derive the base numeric nutrient standards (see **References** in **Part A**). Because many of the base numeric nutrient standards are stringent and may be difficult for MPDES permit holders to meet in the short term, Montana's legislature adopted laws (e.g., §75-5-313, MCA) allowing for the achievement of the standards over time via the variance procedures in **Part B**. This approach should allow time for nitrogen and phosphorus removal technologies to improve and become less costly, and to allow time for nonpoint sources of nitrogen and phosphorus pollution to be better addressed.

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Circular DEQ-12, PART A

DECEMBER 2013 EDITION

1.0 Introduction

Elements comprising Circular DEQ-12, **Part A** are found below. These elements are adopted by the Montana Board of Environmental Review. The nitrogen and phosphorus concentrations provided here have been set at levels that will protect beneficial uses, and prevent exceedences of other surface water quality standards which are commonly linked to nitrogen and phosphorus concentrations (e.g., pH and dissolved oxygen; see Circular DEQ-7 for these standards). The nitrogen and phosphorus concentrations also reflect the intent of the narrative standard at ARM 17.30.637(1)(e), and will preclude the need for case-by-case interpretations of that standard in most cases.

1.1 Definitions

1. **Ecoregion** means mapped regions of relative homogeneity in ecological systems, derived from perceived patterns of a combination of causal and integrative factors including land use, land surface form, potential natural vegetation, soils, and geology. See also, endnote 1.

2. **Large river** means a perennial waterbody which has, during summer and fall baseflow (August 1 to October 31 each year), a wadeability index (product of river depth [in feet] and mean velocity [in ft/sec]) of 7.24 ft^2/sec or greater, a depth of 3.15 ft or greater, or a baseflow annual discharge of 1,500 ft^3/sec or greater. See also, endnote 6.

3. **Soluble reactive phosphorus** means dissolved orthophosphate, as P, determined by direct colorimetry from a filtered sample. The pore size of the filter used must be 0.45 µm. The RRV for soluble reactive phosphorus is 3 micrograms per liter.

4. **Total nitrogen** means the sum of all nitrate, nitrite, ammonia, and organic nitrogen, as N, in an unfiltered water sample. Total nitrogen in a sample may also be determined via persulfate digestion, or as the sum of total kjeldahl nitrogen plus nitrate plus nitrite.

5. **Total phosphorus** means the sum of orthophosphates, polyphosphates, and organically bound phosphates, as P, in an unfiltered water sample. Total phosphorus may also be determined directly by persulfate digestion.

6. **Wadeable stream** means a perennial or intermittent stream in which most of the wetted channel is safely wadeable by a person during baseflow conditions.

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2.0 Base Numeric Nutrient Standards

Table 12A-1 below shows the base numeric nutrient standards for Montana's wadeable streams and large rivers. Details on how these standards were derived can be found mainly in Suplee et al. (2008), Suplee and Watson (2013), and Flynn and Suplee (2013). In **Table 12A-1** nutrient standards for wadeable streams are grouped by ecoregion, either at level III (coarse scale) or level IV (fine scale). Following the ecoregional standards is a list of wadeable streams with reach-specific standards; these waterbodies have characteristics disimilar from those of the ecoregions in which they reside and have therefore been provided reach-specific values. **For wadeable streams, the standards should be applied in this order: reach specific (if applicable) <u>then</u> level IV ecoregion (if applicable) <u>then</u> level III ecoregion. Table 12A-1** also contains a list of large river segments for which base numeric nutrient standards have been developed.

Table 12A-2 contains base numeric nutrient standards for Montana's lakes and reservoirs. The Department has not yet developed regional lake criteria but it is expected that when they are developed they will be grouped by ecoregion. As such, placeholders for future ecoregionally-based criteria are provided in the table. The table also provides lake-specific standards. The Department anticipates that reservoir standards will generally be developed case-by-case and, therefore, will be individually listed, as provided for in the table.

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Table 12A-1. Base Numeric Nutrient Standards for Wadeable Streams in Different Montana Ecoregions, and Base Numeric Nutrient Standards for Individual Wadeable-stream and Large-river Reaches. Other relatied standards are also shown.

		Numeric Nutrient Standard[4]		
Ecoregion[1,2] (level III or IV) and Number, or Individual Reach Description	**Period When Criteria Apply[3]**	**Total Phosphorus (µg/L)**	**Total Nitrogen (µg/L)**	**Other Standards[5]**
ECOREGION (level III or IV):				
Northern Rockies (15)	July 1 to September 30	25	275	125 mg Chl*a* /m^2 and 35 g AFDM/m^2
Canadian Rockies (41)	July 1 to September 30	25	325	125 mg Chl*a* /m^2 and 35 g AFDM/m^2
Idaho Batholith (16)	July 1 to September 30	25	275	125 mg Chl*a* /m^2 and 35 g AFDM/m^2
Middle Rockies (17)	July 1 to September 30	30	300	125 mg Chl*a* /m^2 and 35 g AFDM/m^2
Absaroka-Gallatin Volcanic Mountains (17i)	July 1 to September 30	105	250	125 mg Chl*a* /m^2 and 35 g AFDM/m^2
Northwestern Glaciated Plains (42)	June 16 to September 30	110	1300	
Sweetgrass Upland (42l), Milk River Pothole Upland (42n), Rocky Mountain Front Foothill Potholes (42q), and Foothill Grassland (42r)	July 1 to September 30	80	560	165 mg Chl*a* /m^2 and 70 g AFDM/m^2
Northwestern Great Plains (43) and Wyoming Basin (18)	July 1 to September 30	150	1300	
River Breaks (43c)	See endnote 7	See endnote 7	See endnote 7	
*Non-calcareous Foothill Grassland (43s), Shields-Smith Valleys (43t), Limy Foothill Grassland (43u), Pryor-Bighorn Foothills (43v), and Unglaciated Montana High Plains (43o)**	July 1 to September 30	33	440	125 mg Chl*a* /m^2 and 35 g AFDM/m^2
INDIVIDUAL REACHES (Wadeable Streams):				
Flint Creek, from Georgetown Lake outlet to the ecoregion 17ak boundary (46.4002, -113.3055)	July 1 to September 30	72	500	150 mg Chl*a* /m^2 and 45 g AFDM/m^2
Bozeman Creek, from headwaters to Forest Service Boundary (45.5833, -111.0184)	July 1 to September 30	105	250	125 mg Chl*a* /m^2 and 35 g AFDM/m^2
Bozeman Creek, from Forest Service Boundary (45.5833, -111.0184) to mouth at East Gallatin River	July 1 to September 30	76	270	125 mg Chl*a* /m^2 and 35 g AFDM/m^2
Hyalite Creek, from headwaters to Forest Service Boundary (45.5833,-111.0835)	July 1 to September 30	105	250	125 mg Chl*a* /m^2 and 35 g AFDM/m^2
Hyalalite Creek, from Forest Service Boundary (45.5833,-111.0835) to mouth at East Gallatin River	July 1 to September 30	90	260	125 mg Chl*a* /m^2 and 35 g AFDM/m^2
East Gallatin River between Bozeman Creek and Bridger Creek confluences	July 1 to September 30	50	290	125 mg Chl*a* /m^2 and 35 g AFDM/m^2
East Gallatin River between Bridger Creek and Hyalite Creek confluences	July 1 to September 30	40	300	125 mg Chl*a* /m^2 and 35 g AFDM/m^2
East Gallatin River between Hyalite Creek and Smith Creek confluences	July 1 to September 30	60	290	125 mg Chl*a* /m^2 and 35 g AFDM/m^2
East Gallatin River from Smith Creek confluence mouth (Gallatin River)	July 1 to September 30	40	300	125 mg Chl*a* /m^2 and 35 g AFDM/m^2
INDIVIDUAL REACHES (Large Rivers[6]):				
Yellowstone River (Bighorn River confluence to Powder River confluence)	August 1 -October 31	55	655	
Yellowstone River (Powder River confluence to stateline)	August 1 -October 31	95	815	150 mg Chl*a* /m^2

*For the Unglaciated High Plains ecoregion (43o), criteria only apply to the polygon located just south of Great Falls, MT.

[1] See endnote 1
[2] See endnote 2
[3] See endnote 3
[4] See endnote 4
[5] See endnote 5
[6] See endnote 6

Table 12A-2. Base Numeric Nutrient Standards, Other Standards, and Related Assessment Information for Lakes and Reservoirs.

		Numeric Nutrient Standard[8]			
Ecoregion[1] (level III or IV) and Number, or Individual Lake or Reservoir Description	Period of Application	Total P (µg/L)	Total N (µg/L)	Other Standards[9]	Related Assessment Information
LAKES/RESERVOIRS by ecoregion:					
Middle Rockies (17)	Year-round	[]	[]		
Northern Rockies (15)	Year-round	[]	[]		
Canadian Rockies (41)	Year-round	[]	[]		
Idaho Batholith (16)	Year-round	[]	[]		
LAKE SPECIFIC CRITERIA:					
Flathead Lake[10]	Year-round	5.0	95	Primary productivity XX g $C/m^2 \cdot yr$; Secchi depth ≥ 10.4 m during non turbidity-plume conditions. Phytoplankton chlorophyll *a* 1.0 µg/L, expressed as an annual average.	The following parameters expressed as annual averages: soluble reactive phosphorus (SRP), 0.5 µg/L; nitrate + nitrite (NO_{2+3}), 30 µg/L.
RESERVOIR SPECIFIC CRITERIA:					
	Year-round	[]	[]		

[1] See endnote 1 [10] See endnote 10
[8] See endnote 8
[9] See endnote 9

2.1 Required Reporting Values for Base Numeric Nutrient Standards

Table 12A-3 presents the required reporting values for total phosphorus and total nitrogen, as well as the RRVs for nitrogen fractions that can be used to compute total nitrogen.

Table 12A-3. Required reporting values[a,b] for total nitrogen and phosphorus measurements.

Nutrient		Method of Measurement	Required Reporting Value
Total phosphorus		Persulfate digestion	3 µg/L
Total nitrogen		Persulfate digestion	70 µg/L
Total nitrogen	Sum of:	(a) total kjeldahl nitrogen	150 µg/L
		(b) nitrate + nitrite	See RRVs below
Nitrate- as N			20 µg/L
Nitrite- as N			10 µg/L
Nitrate + Nitrite-as N			20 µg/L

[a] See definition for required reporting values found in footnote 19 of Department Circular DEQ-7.
[b] Concentrations in Table 12A-3 must be achieved unless otherwise specified in a permit, approval, or authorization issued by the Department (DEQ-7; ARM 17.30.702).

2.2 Developing Permit Limits for Base Numeric Nutrient Standards

For total nitrogen and total phosphorus, the critical low-flow for the design of disposal systems shall be based on the seasonal 14Q5 of the receiving water (ARM 17.30.635[4]). When developing permit limits for base numeric nutrient standards, the Department will use an average monthly limit (AML) only, using methods appropriate for criterion continuous concentrations (i.e., chronic concentrations). Permit limits will be established using a value corresponding to the 95th percentile probability distribution of the effluent. Nitrogen and phosphorus concentrations of the receiving waterbody upstream of the discharge may be characterized using other frequency distribution percentiles. The Department shall use methods that are appropriate for criterion continuous concentrations which are found in the document "*Technical Support Document for Water Quality-based Toxics Control*", Document No. EPA/505/2-90-001, United States Environmental Protection Agency, 1991.

3.0 Endnotes

(1) Ecoregions are based on the 2009 version (version 2) of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency maps. These can be found at: http://www.epa.gov/wed/pages/ecoregions/mt_eco.htm . For Geographic Information System (GIS) use within the Department, the GIS layers may be found at: L:\DEQ\Layers\Ecoregions.lyr

(2) Within and among the geographic regions or watersheds listed, base numeric nutrient standards of the downstream reaches or other downstream waterbodies must continue to be maintained. Where possible, modeling methods will be utilized to determine the limitations required which provide for the attainment and maintenance of water quality standards of downstream waterbodies.

(3) For the purposes of ambient surface water monitoring and assessment only, a ten day window (plus/minus) on the beginning and ending dates of the period when the criteria apply is allowed in order to accommodate year-specific conditions (an early-ending spring runoff, for example).

(4) The 30 day average concentration of these parameters may not be exceeded more than once in any five year period, on average.

(5) Other standards comprises water quality variables besides total nutrients that are important for assessing eutrophication in waterbodies. In **Table 12A-1**, the values shown refer to bottom-attached (benthic) algae density quantified as chlorophyll *a* (Chl*a*) or ash free dry mass (AFDM) per square meter of stream bottom. The values are the arithmetic mean of ≥10 replicate measures of benthic algae collected in the wadeable zone (water depths ≤ 1m) from a site during a sampling event. A site is a reach of a stream ≥100 m long but <500 m long or, for some larger streams reaches and for large rivers, may be a transect perpendicular to flow. Algae replicates must be collected in the wadeable zone of streams and rivers using a randomized approach or other, unbiased systematic approaches. Chl*a* and AFDM are used to assess the biomass of algae accumulated on the stream bottom; algae is stimulated by excess nitrogen and phosphorus levels and is associated with (for example) impacts to recreational uses and impacts to stream dissolved oxygen levels.

(6) **Table E-1** below shows the beginning and ending locations for large rivers in Montana.

Table E-1. Large river segments within the state of Montana.

River Name	Segment Description
Big Horn River	Yellowtail Dam to mouth
Clark Fork River	Bitterroot River to state-line
Flathead River	Origin to mouth
Kootenai River	Libby Dam to state-line
Madison River	Ennis Lake to mouth
Missouri River	Origin to state-line
South Fork Flathead River	Hungry Horse Dam to mouth
Yellowstone River	State-line to state-line

(7) In this level IV ecoregion, the narrative standards for nuisance aquatic life (ARM 17.30.637[1][e]) applies in lieu of specific numeric nutrient criteria.

(8) No lake or reservoir in **Table12A-2** shall have a total nutrient concentration that exceeds the values shown based upon an annual average **(do one in 3???).** The Department will determine on a case-by-case basis whether or not a permitted discharge to a stream or river is likely to be affecting any downstream lake or reservoir. If yes, the permittee would be required to meet its average monthly limit year round.

(9) Parameters listed under this column are standards specific to lakes and reservoirs.

(10) Standards and related assessment information (excluding secchi depth) are to be determined from 0-30 m depth-integrated samples. Samples and secchi depth measurements are to be collected at the Midlake Deep site which is located approximately 1 mile west of Yellow Bay Point in a pelagic area of the lake (approximately at latitude 47.861, longitude -114.067).

4.0 References

The following are citations for key scientific and technical literature used to derive the base numeric nutrient standards. This is not a complete list; rather, it contains the most pertinent citations. Many other articles and reports were reviewed during the development of the standards.

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Circular DEQ-12, PART B

DECEMBER 2013 EDITION

1.0 Introduction

Elements comprising Circular DEQ-12, **Part B** are found below. These elements are adopted by the Department following the Department's formal rule making process. Montana state law (§75-5-103 [22], MCA and 75-5-313, MCA) allows for variances from the base numeric nutrient standards (found in **Part A** of this circular) based on a determination that base numeric nutrient standards cannot be achieved because of economic impacts, the limits of technology, or both.

1.1 Definitions

1. **Long-term average** means a description of effluent data from a treatment system using standard descriptive statistics and an assumption that the data follow a lognormal distribution. See also, "*Technical Support Document for Water Quality-based Toxics Control*", Document No. EPA/505/2-90-001, United States Environmental Protection Agency, 1991.

2.0 General Nutrient Standards Variances

Because the treatment of wastewater to base numeric nutrient standards in 2011 would have resulted in substantial and widespread economic impacts on a statewide basis (§75-5 -313 [5][a], MCA), a permittee who meets the end-of-pipe treatment requirements provided below in **Table 12B-1** may apply for and DEQ shall approve a general nutrient standards variance ("general variance")(§75-5 -313 [5][b], MCA). The Department will process the general variance request through the discharge permit, and include information on the period of the variance and the interim requirements. A person may apply for a general variance for either total phosphorus or total nitrogen, or both. The general variance may be established for a period not to exceed 20 years. A compliance schedule to meet the treatment requirements shown in **Table 12B-1** may be granted on a case-by-case basis.

Cases will arise in which a permittee is or will be discharging effluent with N and/or P concentrations lower than (i.e., better than) the minimum requirements of a general variance, but the resulting concentrations outside of the mixing zone still exceed the base numeric nutrient standards. Such permitted discharges are still within the scope of the general variance, because the statute contemplates that a general variance is allowable if the permittee treats the discharge to, **at a minimum**, the concentrations indicated by §75-5-313(5)(b)(i)and (ii), MCA. Thus, permitted discharges better than those at §75-5-313(5)(b)(i)and (ii), MCA are not precluded from falling under a general variance.

Table 12B-1. General variance end-of-pipe treatment requirements per §MCA 75-5 -313(5)(b), through May 2016.

	Long-term Average	
Discharger Category[1]	**Total P (µg/L)**	**Total N (µg/L)**
≥ 1.0 million gallons per day	1,000	10,000
< 1.0 million gallons per day	2,000	15,000
Lagoons not designed to actively remove nutrients	Maintain current performance	Maintain current performance

[1] See endnote 1

The Department must review the general variance treatment requirements every 3 years to assure that the justification for their adoption remains valid. The review will not take place before June 1, 2016, and will occur triennially thereafter. The purpose of the review is to determine whether there is new information that supports modifying (e.g., revising the interim effluent treatment requirements) or deleting the variance. If a low-cost technological innovation for lowering nitrogen and phosphorus concentrations in effluent were to become widely available in the near future, for example, the Department could (after May 2016) make more stringent the concentrations shown in **Table 12B-1**. If, after May 2016, the Department were to adopt general variance treatment requirements more stringent than those provided in **Table 12B-1**, revised effluent limits will be included with the permit during the next permit cycle, unless the demonstration discussed in **Section 2.2** below is made. A compliance schedule may also be granted to provide time to achieve compliance with revised effluent limits.

The Department and the Nutrient Work Group will consider specific factors, listed below in this paragraph, when determining whether the general variance treatment requirements must be updated in accordance with §75-5-313(7)(a) and (b), MCA. The review will occur triennially and will be carried out at a state-wide scale, i.e., the Department will consider the aggregate economic impact to dischargers within a category (the > 1 MGD category, for example).

1. Whether more cost-effective, efficient, and innovative nutrient removal technologies are available.

2. ~~Whether Montana's economic status had changed sufficiently to make nutrient removal more affordable. If new technologies (per 1 above) have not become widely available, the Department will estimate on a statewide basis the cost for facilities within a category (per §75-5-313(5)(b)(i) and (ii), MCA) to move to the next more stringent nutrient treatment level .~~

~~Nutrient treatment levels are defined in Falk et al. (2011)[1].~~ ***THIS TASK MAY NO LONGER BE NEEDED IF THE DEPARTMENT USES THE REDUCTION STEPS DEFINED IN THE GUIDANCE***

~~3.~~2. Whether development of permit limits for base numeric nutrient standards should be revised to reflect N- or P-compound speciation and bioavailability.

Based on the triennial review findings and conclusions, the Department will issue a rulemaking proposal for public comment on the general variances. The proposal will solicit comments from the public on whether the variance should be: (1) re-adopted without changes, (2) re-adopted with changes, or (3) deleted. Based on the review conclusions and public comment, the Department will revise Montana's water quality standards to reflect either (1) new interim limits to apply during the variance or (2) the continuation of the previous interim limits.

2.1 Wastewater Facility Optimization Study

Permitees receiving a general variance are required to evaluate current facility operations in order to optimize nutrient reduction with existing infrastructure and shall analyze cost-effective methods of reducing nutrient loading, including but not limited to nutrient trading without substantial investment in new infrastructure (§75-5-313[9][a], MCA). The Department encourages permittees to examine a full array of reasonable options including (but not limited to) facility optimization, reuse, recharge, and land application. The Department may request the results of the optimization/nutrient reduction analysis within two years of granting a general variance to a permittee.

Changes to facility operations resulting from the analysis carried out as above are only intended to be refinements to the wastewater treatment system already in place. Therefore, optimizations:

1. Should only address changes to facility operation and maintenance and should not be structural changes
2. Should not result in rate increases
3. Must include exploration of the feasibility of nutrient trading within the watershed

How the analysis is to be conducted and by whom is left to the discretion of the permittee. The Department encourages the use of a third-party firm with expertise in this subject.

~~[1] See Endnote 2.~~

3.0 Individual Nutrient Standards Variances

The following sections describe two different types of individual nutrient standards variances ("individual variance").

3.1 Individual Variance Based on Substantial and Widespread Economic Impacts

Montana law allows for the granting of nutrient standards variances based on the particular economic and financial situation of a permittee (§75-5-313 [1], MCA). Individual nutrient standards variances ("individual variances") may be granted on a case-by-case basis because the attainment of the base numeric nutrient standards is precluded due to economic impacts, limits of technology, or both. In general, individual variances are intended for permittees who would have financial difficulties meeting the general variance concentrations, and are seeking individual N and P permit limits tailored to their specific economic situation, or to meet the requirements of **Section 2.2** above.

Like the general variance in **Section 2.0**, individual variances may be established for a period not to exceed 20 years and must be reviewed by the Department every three years to ensure that their justification remains valid. Unlike the general variances presented in **Section 2.0**, the Department will only grant an individual variance to a permittee after the permittee has made a demonstration to the Department regarding the economic impacts that would be incurred from meeting the standards. The assessment process should be completed using Department guidance.

A permittee, using the assessment process referred to above, must also demonstrate to the Department that there are no reasonable alternatives (including but not limited to trading, compliance schedules, reuse, recharge, and land application) that would allow compliance with the base numeric nutrient standards. If no reasonable alternatives exist, then an individual variance is justifiable and becomes effective and may be incorporated into a permit following the Department's formal rule making process. Like any variance, such variances must be adopted as revisions to Montana's standards and submitted to EPA for approval. Individual variances the Department may adopt in the future will be documented in **Table 12B-2** below.

The basis of this type of individual variance will be the economic status of the community, i.e., the demonstration of substantial and widespread economic impacts. At each triennial review the Department will consider if the basic economic status of a community granted an individual variance has changed. The same parameters used to justify the original individual variance will be considered. If new, low-cost nutrient removal technologies have become widely available, or if the economic status of the community has sharply improved, the basis of the variance may no longer be justified. In such cases the department will discuss with the permittee the options going forward, including but not limited to a permit compliance schedule, trading, reuse, recharge, land application, or a general variance.

Based on the triennial review findings and conclusions, the Department will issue a rulemaking proposal for public comment on the individual variances. The proposal will solicit comments from the public on whether each variance should be: (1) re-adopted without changes, (2) re-adopted with changes, or (3)

deleted. Based on the review conclusions and public comment, the Department will revise Montana's water quality standards to reflect either (1) new interim limits to apply during the variance or (2) the continuation of the previous interim limits.

3.2 Individual Variance Based on Water Quality Modeling

In some cases a permittee may be able to demonstrate, using water quality modeling and reach-specific data, that greater emphasis on reducing one nutrient (target nutrient) will achieve similar water-quality and biological conditions as can be achieved by emphasizing reduction of both nutrients. Requiring a point source discharger to immediately install sophisticated nutrient-removal technologies to reduce the non-target nutrient to levels more stringent than what is in statute at §75-5-313(5)(b), MCA may not be the most prudent nutrient control expenditure, and would cause the discharger to incur unnecessary economic expense. Since this relates to economic impacts, as described at §75-5-313(1), MCA, these situations are appropriately addressed by individual variances. If such a case can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Department, then a permittee can apply for an individual variance which will include discharger specific limits reflecting the highest attainable condition for the receiving water rather than limits based on any updated general variance concentration. The permittee will be required to submit the demonstration with the proposed effluent limits to the Department for review. The demonstration must consider effects on the downstream waterbody including effects from the non-target nutrient; if the downstream waterbody will be impacted, some level of reduction on the target and/or non-target nutrient will likely be required or the individual variance will not be granted. In addition, the permittee will be required to provide monitoring water-quality data that can be used to determine if the justifications for less stringent effluent limits continue to hold true (i.e., status monitoring). Because status can change, for example due to substantive nonpoint source cleanups upstream of the discharger, status monitoring by the discharger is required. Details on the requirements for making the demonstration and for collecting the status monitoring data can be found in Department guidance.

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Table 12B-2. Table for individual variances that may be adopted.

MPDES Number	Facility Name	Discharge Latitude	Discharge Longitude	Receiving Waterbody	Receiving Waterbody Classification	Long-term Average Total P (µg/L)	Long-term Average Total N (µg/L)	Start Date	Sunset Date (maximum)	Review Schedule (year)	Review Outcome

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4.0 Endnotes

(1) Based on facility design flow.

(2) Falk, M.W., J.B. Neethling, and D.J. Reardon, 2011. Striking a Balance between Wastewater Treatment Nutrient Removal and Sustainability. Water Environment Research Foundation, document NUTR1R06n, IWA Publishing, London, UK.

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DRAFT 1.1
*Base Numeric Nutrient Standards Implementation Guidance**

Retitled from earlier drafts to reflect the more encompassing nature of this document. Previous draft number was 7.3

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ACRONYMS

Acronym	Definition
DEQ	Department of Environmental Quality (Montana)
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency (US)
LMI	Low to Moderate Income
MCA	Montana Code Annotated
MHI	Median Household Income

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document provides guidance pertaining to implementation of Montana's base numeric nutrient standards and variances from those standards. The remaining sections address the following topics:

Section 2.0: For permittees operating under a general nutrient standards variance, this section provides the defined effluent limits (i.e., nutrient reduction steps) to be met over several permit cycles of the general variance

Section 3.0: Provides guidance for the development of Individual Nutrient Standards Variances for public-sector entities, based on economic factors;

Section 4.0: Provides guidance for the development of Individual Nutrient Standards Variances for private-sector entities, based on economic factors;

Section 5.0: Outlines a streamlined approach for developing site-specific numeric nutrient criteria for streams or rivers where full biological support is demonstrated but where the existing nutrient concentrations exceed applicable nutrient standards; and

Section 6.0: Provides a detailed, data-intensive modeling approach for developing site-specific numeric nutrient criteria. This approach lends itself to the development of individual variances for dischargers.

1.1 DEFINITIONS

1. **Limits of technology** means wastewater treatment processes for the removal of nitrogen and phosphorus compounds from wastewater that can consistently achieve a concentration of 70 µg TP/L and 4,000 µg TN/L.

2.0 DEFINED NUTRIENT-REDUCTION STEPS FOR PERMITTEES OPERATING UNDER A GENERAL NUTRIENT STANDARDS VARIANCE

The Department and the Nutrient Work Group developed a series of defined nutrient-reduction steps to be taken over time and that are specific to recipients of general nutrient standards variances. Per §75-5-313 [8], MCA, general nutrient standards variance may be established for no more than 20 years. The intent of establishing nutrient reduction steps upfront for most of the 20 year period is to provide permittees regulatory certainty well out into the future. This in turn allows for better facility planning and financing. State law still requires the Department to review triennially the general variance concentrations (§75-5-313 [7][b], MCA). However, the Department will only supersede the reduction steps defined here if substantial cost reductions for existing technology have occurred, or technological innovations have allowed for nutrient reductions well beyond the defined steps and those technologies can be readily implemented on facilities in Montana.

For the purposes of permit development, the values provided below apply to recipients of general nutrient standards variances and the concentrations should be viewed as long-term averages.

1. For facilities > 1 million gallons per day:

A. By 2016 (or first receipt of general nutrient standards variance): 10 mg TN/L, 1.0 mg TP/L
B. Next permit cycle (5 year later): 8 mg TN/L, 0.8 mg TP/L
C. Next permit cycle (5 years later): 8 mg TN/L, 0.3 mg TP/L
D. Next permit cycle (5 years later): 5 mg TN/L, 0.15 mg TP/L

2. For facilities < 1 million gallons per day:

A. By 2016 (or first receipt of general nutrient standards variance): 15 mg TN/L, 2.0 mg TP/L
B. Next permit cycle (5 year later): 12 mg TN/L, 2.0 mg TP/L
C. Next permit cycle (5 years later): 10 mg TN/L, 1.0 mg TP/L
D. Next permit cycle (5 years later): 8 mg TN/L, 0.8 mg TP/L

3. For lagoons not designed to actively remove nutrients:

A. By 2016 (or first receipt of general nutrient standards variance): Maintain current lagoon performance and commence nutrient monitoring in the effluent
B. Next permit cycle: Implement lagoon BMPs for reducing nutrient loading

3.0 The Evaluation Process for Individual Variances: Public-Sector Permittees

Montana law allows for the granting of nutrient standards variances based on the specific economic and financial conditions of a permittee (§75-5-313 [1], MCA). These variances, referred to as individual nutrient standards variances ("individual variances"), may be granted on a case-by-case basis because the attainment of the base numeric nutrient standards is precluded due to economic impacts, limits of technology, or both. Individual variances may only be granted to a permittee after the permittee has made a demonstration to the Department that adverse, significant economic impacts would occur, the limits of technology have been reached, or both, and that there are no reasonable alternatives to discharging into state waters. The processes by which the demonstration is made is provided here, and was developed in conjunction with Montana Nutrient Work Group.

WORK ON THIS WHEN JEFF UPDATES THE EXCEL SPREADSHEETS AND SYNCHRONIZE IT AND THIS DOC
Put in a general high-level flow chart or steps chart to overview the process.

Add a section indicating they need to show they cant meet the base numeric nutrient criteria too. Should be a first step and should be fairly simple, using the same methods used in the 2012 "Public Demonstration" paper. This should be farily simple.

Methods outlined below are Montana's modifications to methods presented in U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (1995). If adverse substantial and widespread economic impacts to a community trying to comply with base numeric nutrient standards are demonstrated, the facility upgrade cost-cap

will be determined via a sliding scale as proposed by EPA in its September 10, 2010 memo "EPA Guidance on Variances", reference No. 8EPR-EP.

In taking this approach, the Department has assumed that most permittees who cannot comply with the base numeric nutrient standards (DEQ-12, Part A) would pursue a general variance (DEQ-12, Part B). Therefore, it is only permittees for whom significant economic impacts would occur even at the general variance treatment levels that would likely request individual variances. As such, for communities with secondary scores (discussed further below) of 1.5 or lower, the cost cap for the upgrade would be set at 1.0% of median household income (MHI), including existing wastewater fees. The Nutrient Work Group has indicated that 1.0% of MHI is an acceptable cost cap for a community to expend on wastewater treatment where economic hardship due to meeting base numeric nutrient standards has been demonstrated. Higher Secondary scores would lead to a higher MHI cost cap.

3.1 Substantial and Widespread Economic Impacts: Process Overview

The following is an overview of the steps required to carry out a substantial and widespread economic analysis for a public-sector permittee. The evaluation can be undertaken directly in an Excel spreadsheet template which contains instructions (see **Section 2.2**). The template is called "PublicEntity_Worksheet_EPACostModel_2012.xlsx" and is available from the Department.

Step 1: Verify project costs and calculate the annual cost of the new pollution control project.

Step 2: Calculate total annualized pollution control cost per household (manifested as an increase in the household wastewater bill).

Steps 3-5: The Substantial Test

Step 3: Calculate and evaluate the Municipal Preliminary Screener score based on the town's Median Household Income. This step identifies communities that can readily pay for the pollution control project.

Note: If the public entity passes a significant portion of the pollution control costs along to private facilities or firms, then the review procedures outlined in Chapter 3 of EPA (1995) for 'Private Entities' should also be consulted to determine the impact on the private entities.

Step 4: Apply the Secondary Test. This measurement incorporates a characterization of the socio-economic and financial well-being of households in the community. It comprises five evaluation parameters which are then averaged to give the secondary test score for a given community. A secondary score can range from 1.0 to 3.0.

Note: The ability of a community to finance a project may be dependent upon existing household financial conditions within that community.

Step 5: Assess where the community falls in the substantial impacts matrix. This matrix evaluates whether or not a given community is expected to incur substantial economic impacts due to the implementation of the pollution control costs. If the applicant can demonstrate substantial impacts, then the applicant moves on to the widespread test. If the applicant cannot demonstrate substantial impacts, then they will not perform the widespread test; they will be required to meet the base numeric

nutrient standards, or may request a general variance if they can discharge at the general variance concentrations defined in Department Circular DEQ-12, Part B.

Note: The evaluation of substantial impacts resulting from compliance with base numeric nutrient standards includes two elements; (1) financial impacts to the public entity as measured in Step 3 (reflected in increased household wastewater fees), and (2) current socio-economic conditions of the community as measured in Step 4. Governments have the authority to levy taxes and distribute pollution control costs among households and businesses according to the tax base. Similarly, sewage authorities charge for services, and thus can recover pollution control costs through user's fees. In both cases, a substantial impact will usually affect the wider community. Whether or not the community faces substantial impacts depends on both the cost of the pollution control and the general financial and economic health of the community.

Step 6: The Widespread Test

Step 6: If impacts are expected to be substantial, then the applicant goes on to demonstrate whether or not the impacts are expected to be widespread.

Note: Estimated changes in socio-economic indicators as a result of pollution control costs will be used to determine whether widespread impacts would occur.

Step 7: Final Determination of Substantial and Widespread Economic Impacts

Step 7: If widespread impacts are also demonstrated, then a permittee is eligible for an individual variance after having demonstrated to the Department that they considered alternatives to discharging (including but not limited to trading, land application, and permit compliance schedules). If widespread impacts have not been demonstrated, then the permittee is not eligible for an individual variance (however, the permittee may still receive a general variance if they can comply with the end-of-pipe treatment requirements thereof).

3.2 Completing the Substantial and Widespread Assessment Spreadsheet

Detailed steps for completing the substantial and widespread cost assessment are found in the spreadsheet template "PublicEntity_Worksheet_EPACostModel_2012.xlsx" available from the Department. Readers should refer to that spreadsheet, as it is self explanatory and instructions are found throughout. Below are a few additional details which may help clarify some of the steps:

1. Start at the far left tab of the spreadsheet ("Instructions [Steps to be Taken]") and review the instructions. They are the same steps outlined in **Section 2.1** above, but in more detail. Proceed to subsequent tabs to the right, making sure not to skip any of worksheets A through F.
2. Summarize the project on Worksheet A.
3. Detail the costs of the project on Worksheet B.
4. Calculated the annual cost per household of existing and expected new water treatment costs on Worksheet C.
5. On Worksheet D, carefully read the text in blue and compare it to the results from the MHI test and the community's Low to Moderate Income (LMI) level. Based on this screener, the evaluation will either terminate (i.e., it has been shown that the water pollution control is

clearly affordable), or will continue to the secondary tests on the next tab which is Worksheet E[1].

6. On Worksheet E, note the linkages to websites and phone numbers where the information requested can be obtained. Then use this information to fill in Worksheet F where a secondary score is calculated.
7. The next tab, 'Substantial Impacts Matrix', shows if the community has demonstrated substantial impacts (or not). Those that have clearly demonstrated substantial impacts as well as those that are 'borderline' move on to the widespread tests.
8. On the 'DEQ Widespread Criteria' tab, complete the four descriptive questions. Then, complete the six primary questions and determine the outcome as to whether impacts are widespread. If still unclear, complete the additional secondary questions and again evaluate.
9. In order to be eligible for an individual variance, both substantial and widespread tests must be satisfied.
10. If substantial and widespread impacts are demonstrated, refer to **Section 2.3** below to determine the percentage of median household income that the community is expected to pay towards the pollution control project.

3.3 Determining the Target Cost of the Pollution Control Project

If a permittee has demonstrated that substantial and widespread economic impacts would occur if they were to comply with the base numeric nutrient standards, and there are no reasonable alternatives to discharging, then the cost the permittee will need to expend towards the pollution control project will be based on a sliding scale (**Figure 2-1**). The cost cap is determined as a percentage of the community's MHI, and the key driver of the cost cap is the secondary test (secondary score) calculated in **step 4** of **Section 2.1.**

For example, a community has demonstrated that substantial and widespread economic impacts would occur from trying to comply with the base numeric nutrient standards, and there were no reasonable alternative to discharging. If the permittee's average secondary score from the secondary tests was 1.5, then the annual cost cap for the pollution control project (including current wastewater fees) would be the dollar value equal to 1.0% of the community's MHI at the time that the analysis was undertaken (see blue line, **Figure 2-1**). This 1.0% would include existing wastewater costs plus new upgrades. If this community was already paying 1.0% or greater MHI for its wastewater bill, then no additional monies would be spent (and no additional upgrades would occur) under the individual variance.

The percentage of a community's MHI—as determined by the 'sliding scale' in **Figure 2-1**—would translate to the final wastewater bill that the community would pay after the upgrade. For example, a community with 10,000 households has a MHI of $40,000/year, and the sliding scale table indicates that 1.0% MHI needs to be expended on the pollution control project. To receive the individual variance, the per-household wastewater bill for the community would need to become, on average, $400 per year ($33.33 per month), because $400 is 1% of MHI in that community. If the average household in this community currently has a wastewater bill that is $300 per year ($25.00 per month), then a bill increase of $100 per year per household on average would be warranted to reach $400 per year or 1% MHI.

[1] The Department appended the LMI test to EPA's Municipal Preliminary Screener at this step in the process. This was done in order to address communities in which the income distribution is skewed such that there is a large proportion of high- and low-income individuals, but less in the middle near the median household income. As modified, the test should assure that such communities will move on to the more detailed secondary tests.

Multiplying $100/year in an increased wastewater bill by the number of households on the system (10,000) provides the total annual dollar value available to be expended towards construction, operations, and maintenance of the wastewater upgrade. In this hypothetical case, that amounts to $1 million (10,000 X $100) that could be spent per year on an upgrade project. The upgrade itself may be significantly more than $1 million in initial capital costs, but the annualized payback of capital costs plus O&M costs of the upgrade could not be more than $1 million per year. If the current wastewater bill of this town was already $400 or higher, then no additional change would be expected (i.e., no further system upgrade would be required).

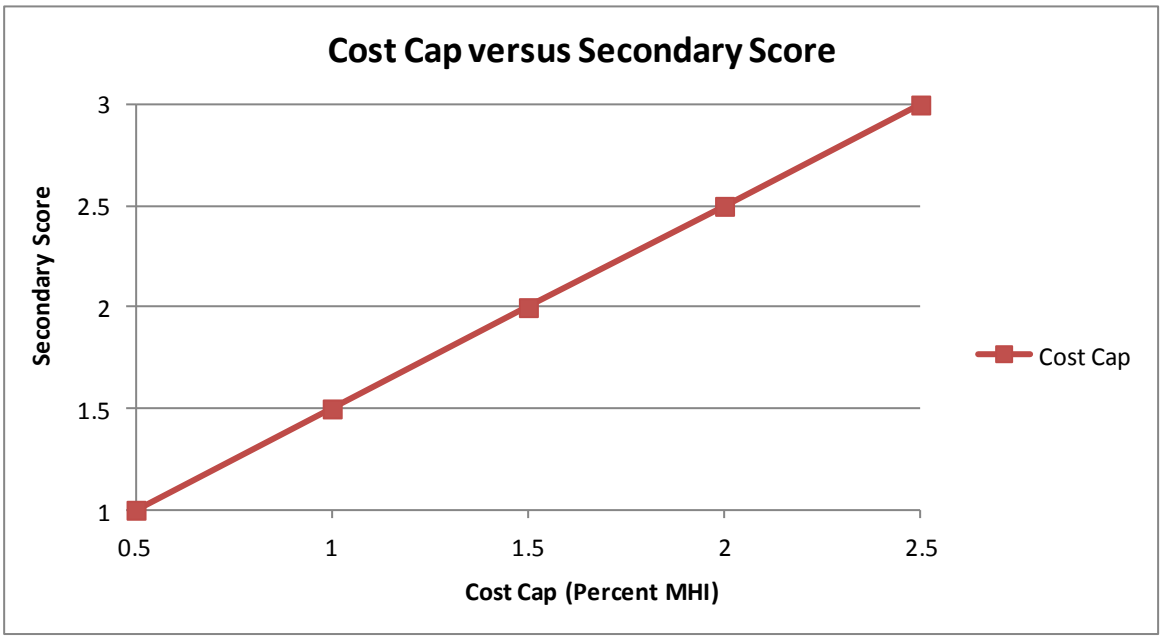

Figure 2-1. Sliding scale for determining cost cap based on a community's secondary score. The horizontal axis represents percentages of a community's median household income (MHI) that the community would be expected to expend towards the pollution control project as a function of the secondary score shown on the vertical axis.

It should be noted that the final cost of the engineering project may not exactly match the dollar value associated with the percent MHI determined via **Figure 2-1** (i.e., the actual project cost could be somewhat lower or somewhat higher than the dollar value equivalent for the percent MHI of the community in question). Engineers should view the dollar value equivalent of the MHI derived from **Figure 2-1** as a target, to help select the most appropriate water pollution control solution for the community. In order to accommodate actual engineering costs for the project, the Department will provide flexibility around the dollar value arrived at via **Figure 2-1**, subject to final Department approval.

When the level of treatment required has been established and accepted by the Department, it will be adopted by the Department following the Department's formal rule making process and documented in Circular DEQ-12, Part B.

4.0 The Evaluation Process for Individual Variances: Private-Sector Permittees

Methods outlined below are almost identical to those presented in U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (1995). If adverse substantial and widespread economic impacts to a private entity trying to comply with nutrient standards are demonstrated, the facility upgrade will be determined via approaches discussed in **Section 3.3.**

4.1 Substantial and Widespread Economic Impacts: Process Overview

The following is an overview of the steps required to carry out a substantial and widespread economic analysis for a private-sector permittee. The evaluation can be undertaken directly in an Excel spreadsheet template which contains instructions (see **Section 3.2**). The template is called "PrivateEntity_Worksheet_EPACostModel_2012.xlsx" and is available from the Department.

Step 1: Verify Project Costs and Calculate the Annual Cost of the Pollution control project to the private entity.

Step 2: Substantial Test. Run a financial impact analysis on the private entity to assess the extent to which existing or planned activities and/or employment will be reduced as a result of meeting the water quality standards. The primary measure of whether substantial impact will occur to the private entity is profitability. The secondary measures include indicators of liquidity, solvency, and leverage.

Step 3: Widespread Test. If impacts on the private entity are expected to be substantial, then the applicant goes on to demonstrate whether they are also expected to be **widespread** to the defined study area.

Note: Estimated changes in socio-economic indicators in a defined area as a result of the additional pollution costs will be used to determine whether widespread impacts would occur.

Step 4: Final Determination of Substantial and Widespread Economic Impacts. If both substantial and widespread impacts are demonstrated, then a permittee is eligible for an individual variance after having demonstrated to the Department that they considered alternatives to discharging (including but not limited to trading, land application, and permit compliance schedules). If widespread impacts have not been demonstrated, then the permittee is not eligible for an individual variance (however, the permittee may still receive a general variance if they can comply with the end-of-pipe treatment requirements thereof).

4.2 Completing the Substantial and Widespread Assessment Spreadsheet

Detailed steps for completing the substantial and widespread cost assessment are found in the spreadsheet template "PrivateEntity_Worksheet_EPACostModel_2012.xlsx" (available from the Department). Readers should refer to that spreadsheet, as it is self explanatory and instructions are found throughout. Detailed steps for private sector entities are also found in Chapter 3 of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (1995). Below are a few additional details which may help clarify some of the steps:

1. Start at the far left tab of the spreadsheet ("Instructions [Steps to Take]") and review the instructions. They are the same steps outlined in **Section 3.1** above. Proceed to subsequent tabs to the right, making sure not to skip any of the worksheets.

2. Summarize the project on Worksheet A.
3. There are no worksheets B through F on the private test.
4. The next worksheet is G where one details the costs of the project.
5. In the next tab, carefully read the 'Substantial Impact Instructions'.
6. In worksheets H through L, the four main substantial tests are presented. For these tests, profit and solvency ratios are calculated with and without the additional compliance costs (taking into consideration the entity's ability to increase its prices to cover part or all of the costs). Comparing these ratios to each other and to industry benchmarks provides a measure of the impact on the entity of additional wastewater costs. For profit and solvency, the main question is how these will be affected by additional pollution control costs. The Liquidity and leverage measures look at how a firm is doing right now financially, and how much additional financial burden they could take on.
7. In the Tab entitled "Substan.Impacts_Determined", instruction is given as to how to interpret the results from the 'Substantial' tests in worksheets H through L.
8. If a 'Substantial ' finding is made, then proceed on to the next tab. If it is not made, then a variance will not be given.
9. On the 'DEQ Widespread Criteria' tab, complete the descriptive questions. Then, complete the primary questions and determine the outcome as to whether impacts are widespread. If still unclear, complete the secondary questions and again evaluate.
10. In order to be eligible for an individual variance, both substantial and widespread tests must be satisfied.
11. If both substantial and widespread impacts are demonstrated from additional pollution control costs, see **Section 3.3** below.

4.3 Cost-cap (or other solution) for Private Entities

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (1995) provides very little guidance as to what financial expenditure should be made towards water pollution control when a private firm has demonstrated substantial and widespread impacts would occur if they complied with the standards. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (1995) only states that "…if substantial and widespread economic and social impacts have been demonstrated, then the discharger will not have to meet the water quality standards. The discharger will, however, be expected to undertake some additional pollution control."

In cases where substantial and widespread economic impact has been demonstrated per methods outlined here in **Section 3.0**, the Department expects that in most cases the discharger (and their engineers) will propose to the Department some level of effluent improvement beyond that which they are currently doing, but less stringent that the general variances concentrations (which are now in statute at §75-5-313, MCA, and which will later be adopted as Department rules in 2016). A likely scenario would be that the discharger could implement a treatment technology one level less sophisticated than that required to meet the general variance concentrations. Basic definitions for different treatment levels are found in Falk et al. (2011); through 2016 the general variance requirement for dischargers > 1 MGD corresponds to level 2. When the discharger and the Department have come to agreement on the level of treatment required, the treatment levels will be adopted by the Department following the Department's formal rule making process, and documented in Circular DEQ-12, Part B.

5.0 Streamlined Methods for Developing Site-specific Numeric Nutrient Criteria

5.1 Background and Rationale

Numeric nutrient criteria have been proposed for all major and several minor ecoregions in Montana (Suplee and Watson, 2013). Suplee and Watson (2013) also include a limited number of site specific criteria, and it has been acknowledged that the Department will need to develop other site-specific nutrient criteria going forward. A criteria development approach using empirical or process-based models (e.g., QUAL2K) is provided in **Section 6.0** of this document. That process is, however, data intensive. There will likely be streams which warrant site-specific numeric nutrient criteria but for which a smaller dataset and less rigorous analysis can be used; this paper outlines a simplified, streamlined approach for doing this.

This simplified approach was motivated by observations stemming from the application of the Department's methodology for assessing stream eutrophication (Suplee and Sada de Suplee, 2011). Using those methods, some streams have been found to support a healthy stream ecology and are in compliance with the biologically-based assessment parameters (e.g., levels of benthic chlorophyll *a*, macroinvertebrate HBI metric), but show exceedences of one or both of the nutrients (N, P) recommended as criteria. Site-specific numeric nutrient criteria are likely to be appropriate in these situations.

Section 5.0 is organized as follows:

Section 5.2: The basic concept and approach is presented;
Section 5.3: Assessment of biological health and minimum dataset requirements are provided; and
Section 5.4: A case study example is given

5.2 Site-specific Methods

This section outlines the streamlined approach for deriving site-specific nutrient criteria for streams and small rivers.

5.2.1 Principal Site-specific Methods

Nutrient concentration data from reference sites have been compiled for each ecoregion (Suplee and Watson, 2013). Data from dose-response studies (nutrient concentration as dose, impact to beneficial use as response) applicable to each ecoregion have also been compiled. Each of these data types provide concentration ranges within which this streamlined site-specific criteria method can operate. In applying this method, two scenarios will be encountered.

Scenario 1: **Figure 5-1** illustrates how information from ecoregionally-applicable reference sites can be used. It is assumed here that a stream assessment (per Suplee and Sada de Suplee, 2011) has already been carried out and has shown that a particular stream's biological condition supports all uses, i.e., no detrimental eutrophication effects have been observed. In **Figure 5-1**, the Department's recommended criterion (black dot with X) falls within the reference distribution of the ecoregion's reference-site data

(median dataset[2]; Suplee and Watson, 2013). This occurs in a number of ecoregions, for example for TP in the Middle Rockies, due to the fact that dose-response studies were the primary consideration in setting the criteria. What the data show us is that there are reference sites which routinely manifest nutrient concentrations higher than the regional criterion; therefore, there is a range of concentrations beyond the recommended nutrient criterion that may still be protective within the ecoregion.
In scenario 1, If an *assessed* stream meets the Department's biological expectations and manifests a nutrient concentration falling between the Department criterion and the 95th percentile of the ecoregional reference dataset (within the dashed arrow, **Figure 5-1**), then the assessed stream is eligible for a site-specific criterion. The stream's new criterion should be established at the 80th percentile of the stream's nutrient dataset[3]. This criterion can then be recommended to the Board of Environmental Review for adoption as a site-specific nutrient standard during a subsequent triennial review.

[2] The median dataset must be used for this analysis and is available from the Department. In the median dataset, within any given ecoregion, nutrient concentrations from each site were first reduced to a median, and then descriptive statistics were calculated for the population of site medians. For an example, see Table 3-1B in Suplee and Watson (2013).
[3] Assuming the assessment methodology in Suplee and Sada de Suplee (2011) remains the same, the stream in question would, in the future, be assessed using the binomial test for streams considered compliant with the nutrient criteria (i.e., null hypothesis is "stream compliant with nutrient criteria"). Due to the allowable exceedence rate (20%) and the gray zone (15%) established in the binomial test, a site-specific nutrient criterion set at the 80th percentile of the site's existing dataset will consistently PASS the binomial in the future (assuming the stream's nutrient conditions are unchanged). The T-test would also be PASS.

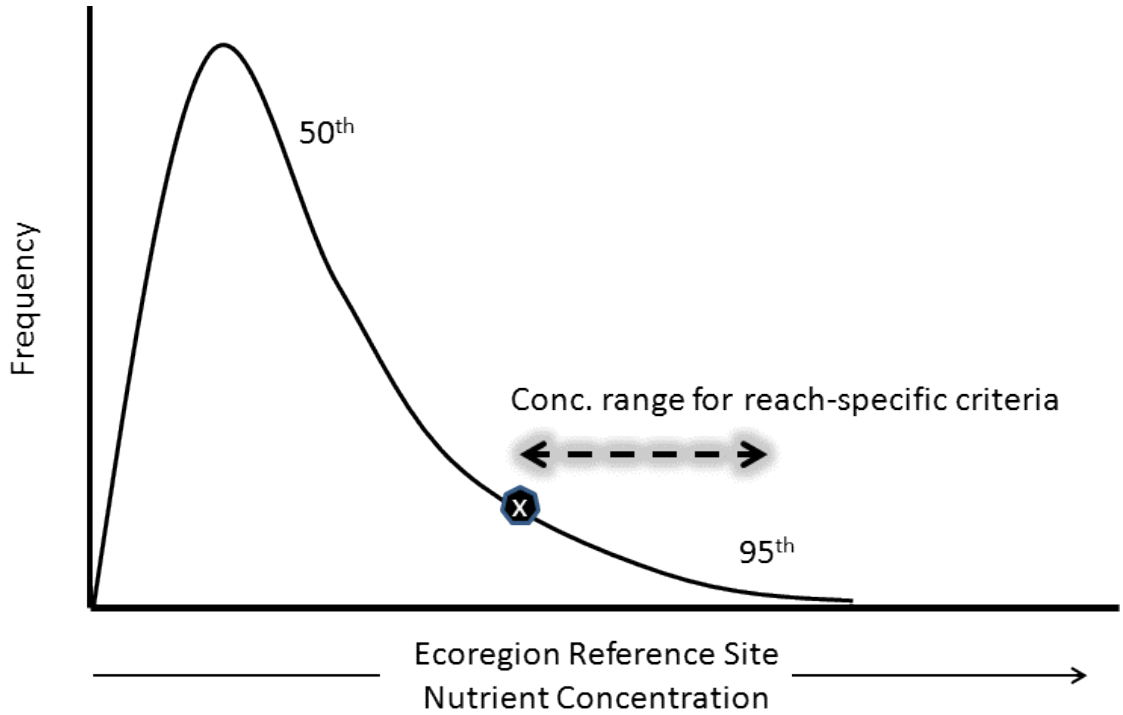

Figure 5-1. Scenario 1. Candidate site-specific nutrient criteria may fall between the ecoregional criterion recommended by the Department (black dot with X) and the 95th percentile of the applicable reference distribution (dashed arrow). The reference distribution used must be the median dataset from Suplee and Watson (2013) or its equivalent update. This method only applies to streams that demonstrate good biological health and full support of beneficial uses using assessment methods in Suplee and Sada de Suplee (2011).

Scenario 2: In other cases, the criteria recommended by the Department are very near to or beyond the 95th percentile of the ecoregional reference distribution. In these cases, the approach shown in **Figure 5-1** will not work and an alternative approach is illustrated in **Figure 5-2**. For each level III ecoregion, Suplee and Watson (2013) have provided in each concluding paragraph a range of concentrations from the dose-response studies they reviewed. The dose-response studies most applicable to the ecoregion in question (not the broader range of generally-applicable studies) will provide the concentration range within which site-specific criteria can be identified.

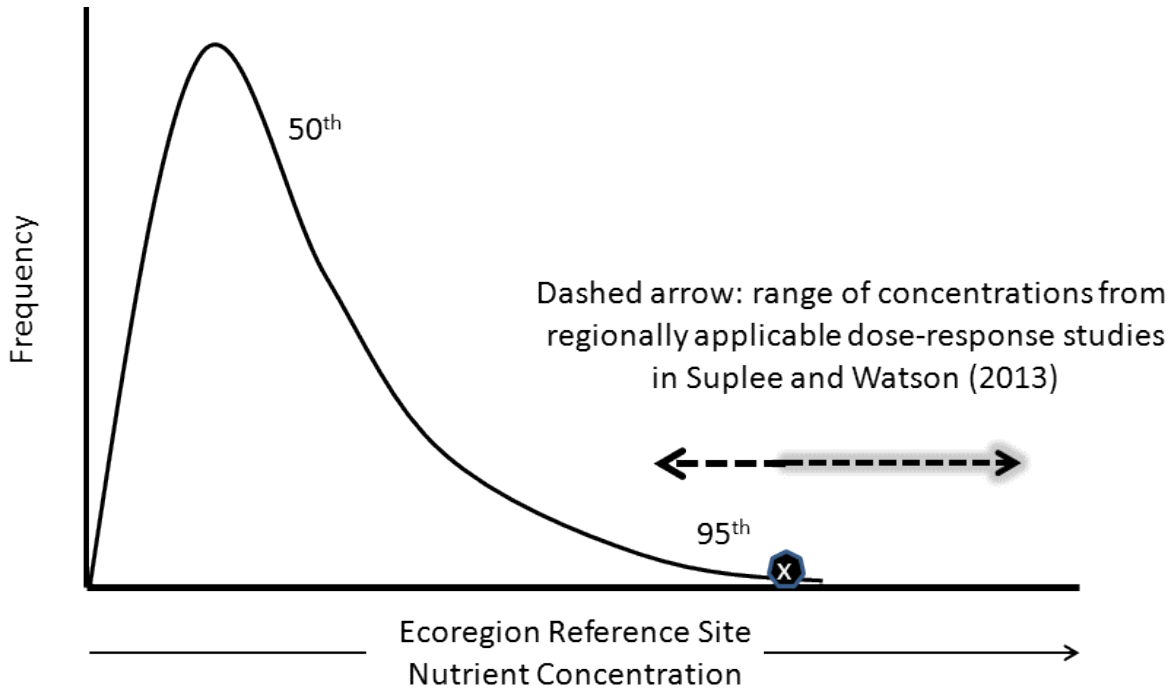

Figure 5-2. Scenario 2. Site-specific criteria derivation method for cases where a Department-recommended criterion is near or above the 95th percentile of the ecoregional reference distribution. Candidate site-specific nutrient criteria fall between the criterion recommended by the Department (black dot with X) and the upper range of the values from the dose-response studies specifically applicable to the ecoregion in question (dashed arrow with gray fringe). The dose-response studies must be from Suplee and Watson (2013) or equivalent updates.

If an *assessed* stream meets the Department's biological expectations but manifests a nutrient concentration above the Department's criterion, and that criterion is near or above the 95th percentile of the ecoregional reference dataset, then the range of concentrations from the applicable dose-response studies can be reviewed. If the assessed stream's nutrient concentration at the 80th percentile falls within the range of the regionally-applicable dose-response studies, then that concentration can be used as a site-specific criterion. This criterion can then be recommended to the Board of Environmental Review to be adopted as a site-specific nutrient standard.

5.2.2 Other Methods

Recent work in the scientific literature provides a means to develop site-specific criteria on a stream-by-stream basis; the method was specifically developed for western regions of the United States (Olson and Hawkins, 2013). This method uses a geospatially-driven model that considers major environmental factors within a watershed that influence nutrient concentrations in streams (geology, precipitation, soil bulk density, etc.). The Department is using this method to help derive nutrient criteria for an area of the state with few or no reference sites and what appears to be naturally-elevated phosphorus concentrations. It should be pointed out that the method is not for use in the plains region of Montana (Olson and Hawkins, 2013).

The Department will consider results provided by others that have used the Olson and Hawkins (2013) method. (Again, this is predicated on the assumption that full biological support is shown in the stream.)

However, results from this model will need to be reviewed by the Department on a case-by-case basis. If approved, they can be recommended to the Board of Environmental Review for adoption as site-specific standards.

In general, streams whose nutrient concentrations fall outside of the defined ranges in **Figures 5-1** and **5-2** are not eligible for this streamlined approach. Rather, methods outlined in Appendix A of the Department's draft guidance document "*Nutrient Standards Implementation Guidance"* should be used. There may also be cases where an upstream level IV ecoregion with naturally high nutrient concentrations is influencing the stream in question, and the reach-specific methods in Section 4.0 of Suplee and Watson (2013) may be applicable.

5.3 Confirmation of Biological Health, and Minimum Dataset

This section addresses the minimum requirements needed to assert that the biological health of the stream fully supports beneficial uses.

5.3.1 Assessment of the Biological Health of the Stream

Assessment methods outlined in Suplee and Sada de Suplee (2011) will be used. That assessment methodology is designed to provide a minimum dataset by which eutrophication-based impacts to beneficial stream uses can be assessed. Data types include:

1. A minimum nutrient dataset (usually 12-13 independent samples)
2. Benthic chlorophyll *a* samples
3. Periphyton samples for taxonomic identification and biological metrics
4. Aquatic insect (macroinvertebrate) samples for taxonomic identification and biological metrics

Data are to be collected during the defined growing season for the ecoregion in question. Given that the minimum data requirements have been met for all data types (nutrients and biological), a stream assessment may come to a scenario that lends itself to site-specific nutrient criteria. **Table 5-1** shows cases where site-specific criteria are likely valid; the table shows just two of the many potential outcomes in the final status determination of a stream assessment (Suplee and Sada de Suplee, 2011).

Table 5-1. Data assessment outcomes which lend themselves to site-specific nutrient criteria.

Scenario(s)	Scenario subclass	Nutrient Binomial Test	Nutrient T-test	Benthic Algae	Diatom Increaser Taxa-Probability of Impairment	Macroinvertebrate HBI Score
7,8	7/8a	FAIL	FAIL	≤125 mg Chla/m2 or ≤35 g AFDW/m2	≤51%	>4
7,8	7/8b	FAIL	FAIL	≤125 mg Chla/m2 or ≤35 g AFDW/m2	≤51%	≤4

In **Table 5-1**, which applies to western Montana streams, it has been found that an assessed stream's nutrients are elevated and fail both statistical tests (the binomial, which looks as the proportion of observations above the criterion, and the t-test, which addresses the dataset average and the presence of high outliers). Note however that the biological signals are all or nearly all acceptable; benthic algal biomass is below the threshold, diatom metrics (where applicable) show a low probability of nutrient impairment, and the macroinvertebrate-based HBI metric is acceptable since it is < 4 (at least for scenario subclass 7/8b), meaning water quality is very good (Hilsenhoff, 1987). Of the two cases shown, subclass 7/8a is less clear due to the elevated HBI score and additional data collection would be warranted before site-specific criteria are developed. For prairie streams, see scenarios 5 and 7, part 2 (Suplee and Sada de Suplee, 2011) as they are equivalent to those in **Table 5-1**.

5.3.2 Dataset Minimum

All data collection must follow Department SOPs (e.g., DEQ, 2011a; DEQ, 2011b; DEQ, 2012). Dataset minimums for a stream assessment are defined in Suplee and Sada de Suplee (2011). For the purposes of developing site-specific nutrient criteria via this process, the dataset needs to have been collected for three years (though not necessarily contiguously) for all of the data types required in Suplee and Sada de Suplee (2011). For western Montana streams, this would be nutrients, benthic chlorophyll *a*, diatoms (where applicable), and macroinvertebrates. If the dataset minimums to complete a stream assessment were achieved after just two years of data collection (which is common), a complete third year of data must be collected as well. For prairie streams, data types should include nutrients, measurement of dissolved oxygen (5 continuous days at a minimum, during summer), diatoms, and visual assessment of aquatic plant densities (DEQ 2011a), for a minimum of three years.

The complete, three-year dataset must be taken through the assessment data matrix. In some cases the additional year may change the initial outcome and it may result that the stream no longer comes to the scenarios shown in **Table 5-1** and site-specific criteria are not warranted. However if the assessed stream again arrives to the scenarios in **Table 5-1**, site-specific nutrient criteria are likely warranted and the approaches outlined in **Section 5.2** may be applied.

5.3.3 Consideration of the Other Nutrient

Where a site-specific criterion is warranted for a nutrient elevated above the Department's ecoregion-based criteria, consideration must be given to the other nutrient in the stream (N vs. P, and vise-versa). For example, a stream manifesting good biological health but elevated P concentrations may very likely be N limited, and should be maintained so. If N limitation were alleviated, there is a high likelihood that the biological health of the stream would be impacted. The Redfield ratio (Redfield, 1958) will be used as a general guide for establishing which nutrient limits (ratio < 6, N limits; ratio > 10, P limits) and for establishing the final concentration of the other nutrient.

What the updated criterion for the non-elevated nutrient should be needs to be determined on a case-by-case basis in conjunction with the Department. A first-cut approximation would be roughly 75% of the established ecoregional criterion concentration.

In some cases, *both* N and P will be elevated above the Department's recommended criteria. In such cases each nutrient should be evaluated per methods in **Section 2.0** and it may result that site-specific

criteria for both N and P will be higher than the Department's values. In such cases factors other than nutrients are likely limiting nutrient effects in the stream.

5.4 CASE-STUDY EXAMPLE

The following is a case which lends itself to site-specific nutrient criteria.

5.4.1 Data Summary for Stream X (in Middle Rockies Ecoregion)

Years of data: 3 (2004, 2011, 2012)
Number of Nutrient Samples: 12-14 (meets minimum)
Average Total Phosphorus (TP) Concentration: 35 µg/L
Average Total Nitrogen (TN) Concentration: 40 µg/L
Benthic Chlorophyll a Samples: 3 (each comprised of 11 sub-replicates) (meets minimum)
Diatom Metric Samples: Not applicable (Department has no validated diatom-based metrics for the Middle Rockies ecoregion at this time)
Macroinvertebrates Samples: 3 (meets minimum)

5.4.2 The Assessment of Stream X

The applicable criteria for the Middle Rockies are 30 µg TP/L and 300 µg TN/L (Suplee and Watson, 2013). Data for stream X were evaluated and TN was found to be quite low (average = 40 µg/L), well below the recommended ecoregional criterion of 300 µg/L. However TP averaged 35 µg/L and was above the ecoregional criterion of 30 µg/L. All biological indicators were found to be acceptable; the data fit scenario subclass7/8b in **Table 5-1**. In additional, other aspects of the data were considered. The macroinvertebrate O/E scores were reviewed to see if they were above 1.0[4] (none were). The benthic chlorophyll *a* concentrations were not only below the threshold they were very low (<< 50 mg Chl*a*/m^2), as was algal AFDM. Nitrate concentrations were also evaluated, and all concentrations were very low.

5.4.3 Site-specific Criteria Derivation for Stream X using the Streamlined Approach

The Department's recommended criterion for the Middle Rockies ecoregion (where stream X is located) is 30 µg TP/L; this value matches the 82nd percentile of the Middle Rockies' reference data (median dataset; Suplee and Watson, 2013). The TP concentration at the 80th percentile of stream X's dataset is 42 µg TP/L, a concentration equal to the 89th percentile in the Middle Rockies reference dataset. Therefore, stream X fits scenario 1 (**Figure 5-1**) because its site-specific TP value (42 µg/L) falls between the Department's recommended criterion and the 95th percentile of the Middle Rockies reference dataset. Stream X's new criterion (42 µg TP/L) is not too far above the Department's criterion, so a large

[4] O/E scores decline from an ideal score of 1.0 due to impacts from a variety of stressors (excess sediment, heavy metals, elevated temperatures, etc.). However it is not uncommon to see scores > 1.0. These indicate the stream has more species of macroinvertebrates than the model is expecting to see for the region. Essentially, slightly elevated nutrient levels have led to a less austere environment and more species can exist than is normally seen. For this reason O/E scores > 1.0 can be indicative of nutrient enrichment above reference. When nutrient enrichment becomes excessive, O/E scores again drop below 1.

reduction in the stream's TN criterion is not warranted. But it is prudent to set the TN lower than 300, to 250 µg TN/L (which is at the 97th percentile of the Middle Rockies reference distribution). This maintains a Redfield ratio of < 6 which should help maintain N limitation. **The site specific criteria would be 42 µg TP/L and 250 µg TN/L, applicable during the growing season for the Middle Rockies (July1-Sept 30).**

6.0 Guidelines for Developing Site-specific Numeric Nutrient Criteria via Water Quality Modeling, and the Relation of these Criteria to Individual Nutrient Standards Variances

Circumstances may arise where, for a specific discharger, it may not make sense to move to the new, lower general variance concentrations at the time the Department updates them during a triennial standards review. Similarly, it may not make sense for a discharger to upgrade to one of the nutrient reduction steps (see **Section 2.0** of this document) that have been defined for the 3 permit cycles subsequent to the initial treatment requirements (e.g., 1 mg TP/L and 10 mg TN/L) defined in statue at §75-5-313 (5)(b), MCA.

In some cases a permittee may be able to demonstrate, using water quality modeling and reach-specific data, that greater emphasis on reducing one nutrient (the target nutrient) will achieve the same desired water-quality conditions as can be achieved by emphasizing reduction of both nutrients. Requiring a point source discharger to immediately install sophisticated nutrient-removal technologies to reduce the non-target nutrient to levels more stringent than what is in statute at §75-5-313(5)(b), MCA may not be the most prudent nutrient control expenditure, and would cause the discharger to incur unnecessary economic expense. Since this can be interpreted as a form of economic impact, *sensu* §75-5-313(1), MCA, these situations are appropriately addressed by individual variances.

If such a case can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Department, then a permittee can apply for an individual variance which will include discharger-specific limits reflecting the highest attainable condition for the receiving water rather than limits based on any new general variance concentration. The demonstration must consider effects on the downstream waterbody including effects from the non-target nutrient; if the downstream waterbody will be impacted by the facility, some additional level of reduction on the target and/or non-target nutrient (beyond that required to protect beneficial uses in the receiving waterbody)will be necessary or the individual variance may not be granted. In addition, the permittee is required to provide monitoring water-quality data that can be used to determine if the justification for less stringent effluent limits continues to hold true (i.e., status monitoring is required). Because status can change, for example due to substantive nonpoint source cleanups upstream of the discharger, status monitoring by the discharger is required.

The purpose of **Section 6.0** is to provide guidelines for the types of information the Department would need to evaluate in order to permit a discharger to remain at treatment levels less stringent than any general variance requirements as defined in **Section 2.0** of this document.

6.1 Mechanistic and Empirical Modeling Approaches for Establishing Individual Variances and (Potentially) Reach-specific Nutrient Standards

Two approaches may be used to establish that upgrading a wastewater facility to updated general variance levels would not result in material progress towards attaining defined water-quality endpoints and beneficial use support:

1. Simulations based on mechanistic computer models

2. Demonstration of use support based on empirical data

Whichever approach is selected—and in fact both approaches can be pursued simultaneously—the Department will require a 2-year biological characterization of the reach in question. A solid understanding of the biological status existing under the current level of water quality is required. Factors (both natural and human-caused) independent of nutrient concentrations can influence biological integrity and need to be understood. The biological characterization will change from case to case, but will normally involve collection of diatoms, macroinvertebrates, benthic and phytoplankton algae density, and critical physical and chemical parameters that influence these. See Section 2.0 **Appendix A** for an example of the types of biological data and the rationale for each.

The following provides further detail on the two modeling approaches bulleted above.

Simulation Based on Mechanistic Computer Models. The Department will consider mechanistic model results that demonstrate that the lowering of one nutrient (e.g., TP) without the lowering (or with less lowering) of the other would achieve essentially the same water quality endpoint (i.e., equivalent movement towards the water quality goal), subject to Department approval of the model and the model's parameterization. Modeled endpoints may include changes in water quality (pH, dissolved oxygen, etc.), and benthic and phytoplankton algae density. Mechanistic models must be supported by data from a Department-approved study design that includes characterization of the chemical, biological, and hydrological conditions of the study reach during a lower-than-average baseflow condition. Data collection should follow Department SOPs.

The Department encourages the use of the QUAL2K model (Chapra et al., 2010) but may consider results from other water quality models as well. Modeled nutrient reduction scenarios can vary, but scenarios based on the five treatment levels described in Falk et al. (2011)—which represent steps in biological nutrient removal technologies—are encouraged by the Department. The Department will consider nitrogen and phosphorus independently in this analysis.

The state of the art in computer water quality/algal growth modeling is such that nutrient co-limitation and community interaction of river flora is poorly simulated (or is not simulated at all). Models usually treat algal growth dynamics in streams and rivers as though the algae were a monoculture (which is not the case). Because of the uncertainties in model simulations, the Department will require monitoring **(per NEW RULE I [3][a])** for dischargers that are permitted to depart from general variance concentration requirements based on a mechanistic model. The intent of the monitoring is to corroborate (or refute) the computer simulated results. At a minimum, growing season benthic-algae

sampling will be required for a reach of the river downstream of the permittee's mixing zone, to be established in coordination with the Department. If the base numeric nutrient standard for the river in question was developed based on another water quality endpoint (for example, pH), then data collection must also include that parameter. If the collected data and the computer modeling results corroborate one another, then a reach-specific base numeric nutrient standard may be in order. Any reach-specific nutrient standard so determined may be adopted by the Board of Environmental Review under its rulemaking authority in §75-5-301(2), MCA.

Demonstration of Use Support Based on Empirical Data. Permittees may begin at any time to collect nutrient concentration, benthic and phytoplankton algae, and other biological and water quality data in the receiving waterbody downstream of their mixing zone. In cases where the Department's base numeric nutrient standards for the waterbody were developed using a specific water quality endpoint (for example, pH), data collection must include that parameter. Data collection shall follow Department SOPs. Permittees are strongly encouraged to coordinate with the Department on study design and data collection protocols upfront, to assure that the data will be acceptable to the Department when the time comes for evaluating the outcomes. For example, it has been shown that chlorination of effluent can, in some cases, mute the effects of nutrients for some distance downstream (Gammons et al., 2010); this would need to be accounted for in any study design. Subject to Department approval, these data may be used to demonstrate that remaining at the previous general-variance treatment level (assumed here to have been achieved by the permittee) was adequate to support beneficial uses of the waterbody. If the collected data conclusively indicate that beneficial uses of the waterbody are fully supported, then reach-specific base numeric nutrient standards may be in order. Any reach-specific nutrient standards so determined may be adopted by the Board of Environmental Review under its rulemaking authority in §75-5-301(2), MCA. An example of an empirical approach to developing reach-specific nutrient criteria is provided in Section 2.0 of **Appendix A**.

6.2 Protection of Downstream Beneficial Uses

Any reach-specific criteria developed for a receiving stream using a mechanistic or empirical model will also need to protect downstream beneficial uses. "How far downstream" is a consideration which will vary from case-to-case; an example is provided in Sections 2.7 and 4.0 of **Appendix A**. Mechanistic models have very clear advantages over empirical models for running hypothetical scenarios and assessing potential downstream impacts, however a mechanistic model will normally be more expensive to complete. A budget estimate for a mechanistic and an empirical model is provided in Section 6.0 of **Appendix A.** If it results that modeling (of either type) has shown that beneficial uses of the assessed reach can be protected with site-specific criteria, but a downstream reach will be negatively impacted by the higher concentrations of one (or both) nutrients, then the Department will require treatment levels which will support the uses in the downstream waterbody or it will not grant the individual variance.

6.3. Unwarranted Cost and Economic Impact

In order to satisfy the economic impact component of an individual variance (§75-5-313[2], MCA) permittees must provide the Department approximate estimates of the capital costs, and operations and maintenance costs, which would have been expended in order to upgrade the facility to the new general variance concentrations. The intent is to demonstrate that there were substantial savings in capital costs, materials, fuel, and energy by opting *not* to upgrade the facility. The permittee can compare the cost saved to the MHI of the community, similar to what is done for determining substantial and widespread economic impacts (see steps 1 through 5, **Section 2.2**); however, the

Department wants to make clear that no specific percent of MHI needs to be realized in order for this aspect of the analysis to be satisfied. Permittees are encouraged to work with the Department's economist when carrying out this analysis (Jeff Blend or his successor). Capital costs saved would not include design-related work and overhead. Operations and maintenance cost saved should be estimates of fuel and/or electrical consumption, and other materials (e.g., chemicals). Permittees are not required to carry out a complex analysis comparing the relative economic or social value of protecting one resource (the stream or river) vs. another (e.g., air quality) and then trying to quantify the relative savings. Rather, the Department wants a straight-forward quantification of cost savings associated with the key factors of concern (capitol costs, fuel and electrical consumption, and routine materials such as chemical additions).

6.4 Department Adoption and Periodic Review of the Individual Variance

Nutrient concentrations in the draft individual variance would be based on the results of modeling and the assessment of downstream use protection as described above. Individual variances approved by the Department become effective and may be incorporated into a permit only after a public hearing and adoption by the Department (§75-5-313[4], MCA).

Status monitoring of the receiving stream and the affected downstream waterbody will be used to evaluate the individual variance justification going forward. For example: model results have shown that a large reduction of phosphorus by the permittee would render the receiving stream P-limited and in full support of beneficial uses, without a reduction in nitrogen. At the same time, nonpoint contributions of nitrogen to the downstream waterbody of concern are presently large enough that a substantial reduction of nitrogen load by the permittee would have had little or no beneficial effect. As a result, the permittee's individual variance reflects a low TP concentration and a TN concentration of 10 mg/L. If in the next ten years (of the twenty year variance period) nonpoint sources cleanup sufficiently that the 10 mg TN/L concentration has become a sizeable proportion of the downstream nitrogen load and reduction of that load would benefit the stream, then the justification for the 10 mg TN/L will have changed. Any updated individual variance would reflect a lower TN concentration. As before, modeling could be used to help derive the updated TN concentration.

7.0 References

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APPENDIX A: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAMPLING AND MODELING THE EAST GALLATIN RIVER TO ACCOMPLISH MULTIPLE OBJECTIVES

1.0 Background

The Department indicated in its draft numeric nutrient standards rule package that a person may collect and analyze water quality and biological data along a reach of stream or river to determine if reach-specific numeric nutrient criteria different from those of the Department are warranted. A draft proposal of this type was provided to the Department in July 2012 for the East Gallatin River (HDR Engineering, 2012)[5]. The Sampling and Analysis Plan (SAP) provided to the Department in July 2012 (HDR Engineering, 2012) is based on sites that were sampled in 2009-2010 for the purpose of determining flow-stage relationships in the East Gallatin River. Building on those sites, the following are recommendations for an optimized study design which can be used to develop reach-specific nitrogen and phosphorus criteria for the East Gallatin River. It is hoped that this document may also serve as a blueprint for similar work that may be carried out on other Montana rivers or streams.
The Department already has a public-reviewed and finalized assessment methodology for determining when a stream reach is impaired by excess nitrogen and phosphorus (Suplee and Sada de Suplee, 2011). However, that assessment methodology was designed to be a minimum data method and was not intended to be sufficient for deriving reach-specific criteria. Therefore, the reader will find that methods recommended below are more data intensive than those needed to complete an assessment via the assessment methodology.

1.1 Design and Possible Outcomes of the Investigation

The East Gallatin River is an excellent case study in which to explore several variations on the development of reach-specific criteria. These variations include:
1. The case where a stream reach may have natural factors (e.g. high turbidity, cold temperature, etc.) that suppress benthic algae growth, and therefore reach-specific criteria are appropriate;
2. The case where benthic algae is found to be above nuisance levels, but modeling shows the algae problem can be addressed by focusing on the reduction of one nutrient more than the other; or
3. The case where reach-specific numeric nutrient criteria for a reach of the East Gallatin River are appropriate, but consideration of downstream beneficial uses precludes their application.

Figure 1-1 below forms the basis for the recommendations in the rest of this document.

[5] It should be noted that the Department has developed reach-specific criteria for the East Gallatin River using approaches somewhat different than those provided here. See Section 4.0 in Suplee and Watson (2012).

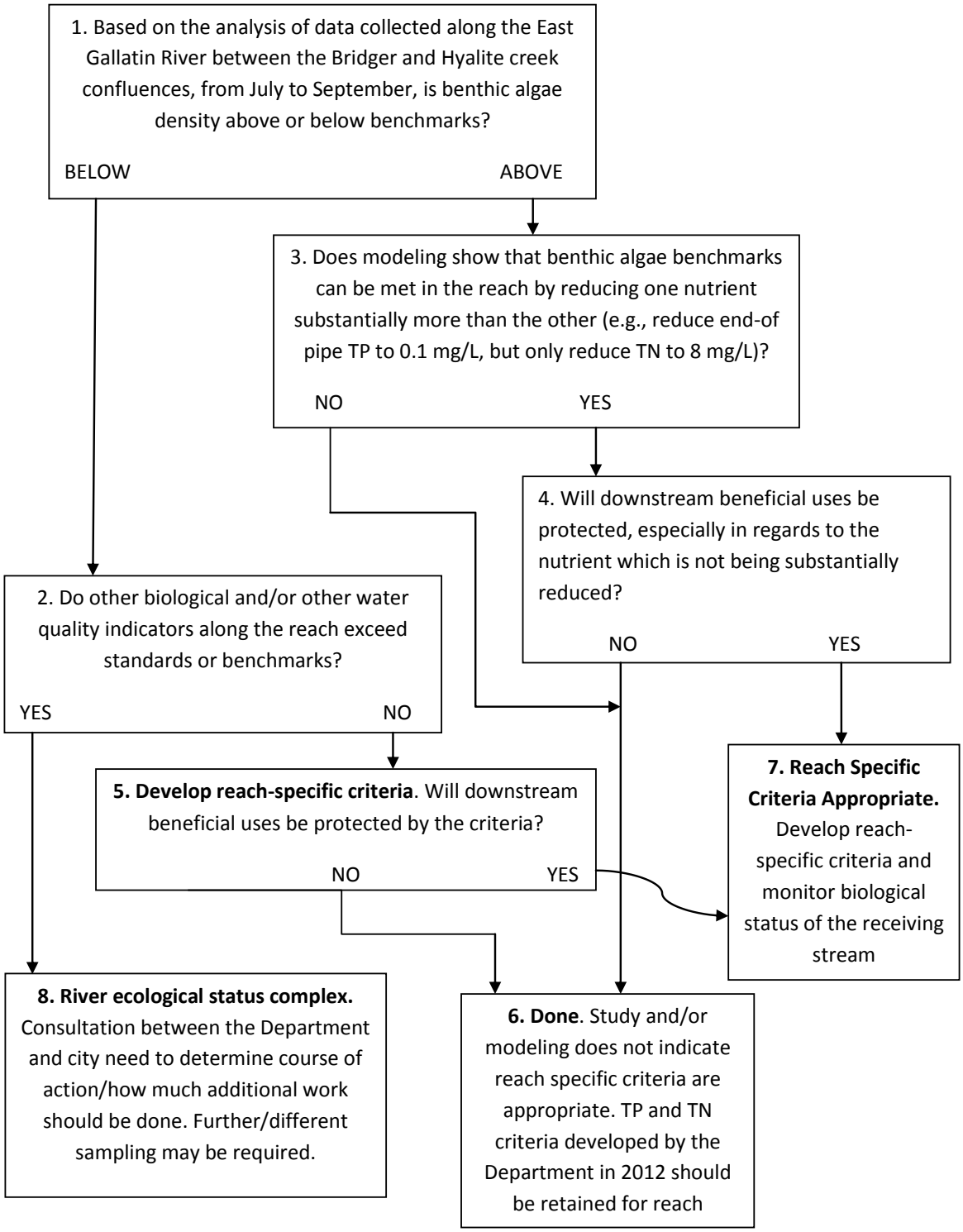

Figure 1-1. Flowchart outlining various outcomes from the analysis of reach-specific data and the development of reach-specific criteria.

Figure 1-1 provides for an empirical approach to developing reach-specific criteria and assessing downstream effects of these criteria. It provides a mechanistic model approach (starting in Box 3), as

well as an approach where either option can be pursued (starting in Box 5). Regardless of which approach is taken, as shown in **Figure 1-1,** proper biological characterization of the mainstem East Gallatin River needs to be undertaken. Both criteria derivation approaches require robust field data and an understanding of the impairment status of the river in relation to nuisance algae and/or other aquatic life.

Please note that "other water quality indicators" (Box 2) in **Figure 1-1** does not include a comparison of measured nutrient concentrations to currently recommended criteria for the reach. (That would be circular.) It does, however, include things such as pH, DO, and DO delta; i.e., effect variables. It is a foregone conclusion (based on existing data) that much or all of the reach below the Bozeman water reclamation facility (WRF) outfall will manifest nutrient concentrations in excess of the Department's recommended criteria.

Figure 1-1 does not provide closure in all circumstances. There is a pathway by which one can arrive to Box 8 "River ecological status complex". If the study findings lead to this outcome, it is not clear at this point what the path forward would be. It may require substantially more sampling and analysis. The assumption here is that the Department and the city would want to discuss what (if any) further work would be carried out, and what the endpoints might look like.

1.2 Summary of the Basic Approaches to Reach-specific Criteria

Two broadly defined modeling approaches to developing criteria (empirical and mechanistic) are detailed in the following sections. Briefly, the basic characteristics and strengths and weaknesses of each are given below.

Empirical Approach. Fewer overall sites to sample compared to mechanistic modeling and, as a result, lower overall cost. Samples can be collected most years during baseflow. Samples need to be collected for at least three years, however two of those three years are already needed for the basic biological characterization of the reach and the same sites can be used for both. Robustness of the empirical statistical relationships are difficult to know in advance and could require additional data beyond three years. The ability to run "what if" scenarios or extrapolate predictions outside of the range of data from which the relationship is developed is much more limited compared to that of the mechanistic model.

Mechanistic Approach. This method requires more overall sites and more complex data collection compared to the empirical approach, with concomitantly higher cost. The mechanistic model still requires a two-year biological characterization, only some sites of which will overlap with the sampling sites for the model. The model will also require collection of DO, pH, etc. with deployed water-quality sondes. As you can imagine, these factors increase the cost and complexity of this approach. Data for calibration and validation of the model can be collected during one field season, provided that both collections are done near to peak growth and approximately a month apart. Perhaps two separate low-flow years of data is a better corroboration of the model. Preferably, data collection should occur during a low baseflow (i.e., near the seasonal 14Q5 or, optionally, when baseflow is below the long-term seasonal average). This ensures that physical and biogeochemical conditions are consistent with that of the targeted low-flow period. Once the model is corroborated (i.e., validated) it can readily be used to run "what if" scenarios which can assess downstream uses, different nutrient reduction strategies at the Bozeman WRF and their effects, etc.

2.0 Biological Characterization of the East Gallatin River, and the Empirical Model Approach to Deriving Reach-specific Criteria

Objective 1: Determine the current biological condition of the reach of the East Gallatin River between the Bridger Creek and West Gallatin River confluences during the growing season (summer and early fall) and compare the results to standards and benchmarks used to assess stream eutrophication.

2.1 Detailed Consideration of the Objective 1

The following questions are designed to address objective 1 given above:

In the wadeable regions of the East Gallatin River between the Bridger Creek and West Gallatin River confluences, during the July 20 to September 30 period, what:

(a) are the average benthic algae densities (quantified as chlorophyll a and ash free dry mass, per m^2)?

(b) is the areal coverage and thickness of benthic algae and macrophytes (based on standardized visual assessment methods)?

(c) is the range and central tendency of specified macroinvertebrate metric scores (MT Hilsenhoff Biotic Index, O/E, and EPT taxa richness)?

(d) is the range and central tendency of specified diatom metric scores (WEMAP MVI and WEMAP WA TN)?

(e) are the dissolved oxygen concentrations and pH compared to state standards, and what is the dissolved oxygen delta (daily maximum minus the daily minimum)?

(f) are the concentrations of nitrogen and phosphorus (total and soluble) and total suspended solids?

(g) is the stream temperature, and incoming light intensity(in PAR units, e.g., µmol quanta/m^2·s)?

(h) are the concentrations of herbicides which are frequently used in the watershed?

Note in the question at the start of **Section 2.1** the dates during which data collection should occur (July 20 to the end of September). These dates were based on the Middle Rockies growing season (Suplee et al., 2007), and the fact that in the East Gallatin River the first three weeks of July have considerably higher flows compared to August and September (shown in dark gray, **Table 2-1**). Commencing July sampling after July 20th will generally exclude the higher flows and lead to data collection during base flow conditions more consistent with August and September. Sampling could extend into the first two weeks of October, if temperatures remain moderate and base flow conditions remain reasonably stable (Suplee and Sada de Suplee, 2011).

Table 2-1. Discharge, ft^3/sec for USGS Station 06048700 "East Gallatin River at Bozeman, Mont.". Mean of daily values for 10 years of record (calculation period 2001-10-01 to 2011-09-30).

Day of month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	42	47	45	118	283	433	164	52	43	40	55	47
2	44	43	44	128	267	441	155	51	42	41	55	47
3	44	42	46	124	268	453	147	53	39	42	57	47
4	41	43	48	112	297	433	142	53	37	44	56	47
5	43	44	47	121	295	418	141	51	39	48	55	47
6	43	47	46	148	328	425	130	52	42	50	53	47
7	41	44	46	139	364	479	124	51	43	51	55	46
8	46	44	52	140	379	461	118	52	41	51	62	43
9	44	42	54	149	376	440	108	54	43	52	60	43
10	42	42	56	157	380	443	102	52	50	52	56	44
11	41	42	58	155	373	513	101	49	45	52	56	46
12	42	42	70	164	373	501	97	46	41	53	56	46
13	43	42	88	182	377	465	94	45	42	52	57	45
14	44	42	88	218	404	436	90	45	42	52	56	45
15	43	41	80	232	439	420	84	47	43	55	52	45
16	42	41	80	212	442	404	81	44	42	59	55	43
17	44	41	81	229	464	390	78	44	44	61	54	42
18	46	41	86	239	484	359	75	47	45	59	53	41
19	51	42	89	235	509	335	73	46	44	59	53	43
20	48	40	88	231	528	310	68	42	44	66	52	44
21	47	41	93	254	523	299	66	41	46	63	49	45
22	44	41	94	279	505	277	66	41	47	58	47	44
23	44	41	94	324	495	264	67	45	48	56	48	46
24	44	41	90	315	500	247	62	43	49	56	46	44
25	43	41	89	290	615	237	63	41	46	57	48	45
26	43	42	95	293	540	228	64	41	43	55	50	46
27	47	43	93	270	502	209	63	39	42	55	48	44
28	46	43	95	266	475	195	61	39	42	55	47	44
29	44	41	91	274	490	183	55	41	42	57	46	46
30	45		97	295	466	175	51	41	44	57	47	44
31	43		104		444		50	43		56		43

To further address the questions posed at the start of **Section 2.1**, it will be necessary to measure a number of physico-chemical parameters; the rationale for measuring each of these is described below. Biological parameters specified in the questions above were selected because they are known to be directly influenced by or significantly correlate with lotic nutrient concentrations. The Department has established benchmarks for most of the physic-chemical and biological variables, and East Gallatin River data can be compared against these (DEQ-7, 2012; Suplee and Sada de Suplee, 2010).

Benthic algae densities (chlorophyll *a* [Chl*a*] and ash free dry mass [AFDM] per m^2). Based on work in the Clark Fork River, statewide public opinion surveys, and a whole-stream dose-response study, the Department is using average Chl*a* levels of 125 to 150 mg/m^2 and 35 g AFDM/m^2 as harm-to-use thresholds for western Montana rivers and streams (Dodds et al., 1997; Suplee et al., 2009; Suplee and Sada de Suplee, 2011). Algae densities above these levels impact the recreation and aquatic life uses. The Department also has standard visual assessment methods to asses algal and macrophyte density at a coarser scale (WQPBWQM-011, 2011). The general composition, amount, color, and condition of aquatic plants are visually assessed in the field using the Aquatic Plant Visual Assessment Form. This information helps describe the health and productivity of the aquatic ecosystem, records nuisance aquatic plant problems, documents changes in the plant community over time, and can be used to help corroborate the quantitative Chl*a* results.

Macroinvertebrate metrics. The Hilsenhoff Biotic Index (HBI) is included as part of the Department's current eutrophication assessment methodology (see Suplee and Sada de Suplee, 2011). The HBI index was designed to assess biological impacts caused by organic enrichment and eutrophication (Hilsenhoff, 1987). The Department considers HBI scores in the Middle Rockies > 4.0 to indicate an impact to aquatic life (Suplee and Sada de Suplee, 2011). Two other metrics, O/E and EPT richness, were considered during the development of the eutrophication assessment methodology since both metrics correlated significantly to nutrient concentrations (Tetra Tech, 2010); however, for simplicity, only the HBI was retained in that methodology. Nevertheless, it would be of value to include these metrics in this study. The O/E metric evaluates the taxa diversity that was actually **O**bserved compared to an **E**xpected taxa diversity for the location where the sample was collected. The Department uses an O/E ratio of 1.0 to 0.9 as un-impacted; ≤ 0.9 is the harm threshold (i.e., loss of 10% of species). Modest stream nutrient enrichment can actually cause the metric to be > 1.0. A Bray-Curtis Index should be calculated to accompany the O/E to help interpret counterintuitive O/E scores (WQPBWQM-009, 2012). The EPT richness metric was part of older DEQ protocols and has application to intermountain valley and foothill streams. EPT richness values > 14 are considered healthy and this value will decline with water quality impacts (Bukantis, 1998).

Diatom metrics. The Department currently addresses nutrient impacts using increaser diatom taxa metrics which were developed using discriminant function analysis (Bahls et al., 2008, Teply, 2010a and 2010b; Suplee and Sada de Suplee, 2011). Currently there is no calibrated and validated model for the ecoregion in which the East Gallatin River resides (the Department hopes to have such a metric in a year or so). Therefore, two diatom metrics are recommended (one for TN, one for TP) which were developed by others and which correlate closely with stream nutrient concentrations in Montana (Tetra Tech, 2010). The metrics are WEMAP WA TN (for TN) and WMAP MVI (for TP); each was developed from work in the Western Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Program (EMAP) of the early 2000s. Results that differ largely from the regression line shown in Tetra Tech (2010) might suggest a stream with characteristics different from the Middle Rockies norm; for example, a WEMAP MVI diatom score of 1.5 associated with a TP concentration of 0.25 mg/L would be well outside the expected pattern (one would expect a score closer to 3)(Tetra Tech, 2010).

Dissolved oxygen, pH. Standards for dissolved oxygen (DO) and pH for a B-1 waterbody are established in state law (DEQ-7 October, 2012). DO and pH have been linked to elevated nutrient concentrations (Stevenson et al., 2012), making them good parameters to measure. But the Department has frequently observed that DO minima are not found to be out of compliance in heavily eutrophied streams, at least during summer, due to stream re-aeration. However, punctuated DO problems can occur in fall when the built-up algae senesce *en masse* (Suplee and Sada de Suplee, 2011). Therefore, in addition to state-adopted DO standards, the Department uses DO delta (daily maximum minus the daily minimum) of 5.3 as a benchmark for excessive plant productivity and respiration in streams (see Appendix C.2, Suplee and Sada de Suplee, 2011). Others have found DO delta to be valuable in assessing eutrophication in northern rivers, and recommend a benchmark of 5.0 (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, 2010).

Concentration of nitrogen and phosphorus (total and soluble), total suspended solids, temperature, incoming light intensity, and herbicide concentrations. These water quality parameters are critical for the development of empirical relationships between algae density and nutrient concentrations. Variables that influence light levels are particularly important for algal growth rates. Light measurements can include PAR near the stream bottom, or (as a possible surrogate) measurements of canopy density above the water's surface. Temperature alters the growth rates of stream algae. In addition, stream samples for herbicides which have historically been used in the basin should be

collected as these, if present in sufficient concentration, could suppress algal growth. Previous work has shown herbicides to be present in Montana rivers and streams, with atrazine, metolachlor, and triallate being among the most commonly detected (USGS, 2004). Algae (as well as macrophytes) are sensitive to these herbicides and growth can be suppressed at fairly low concentrations (see work by the USGS and EPA at: http://www.epa.gov/oppefed1/ecorisk_ders/aquatic_life_benchmark.htm#benchmarks**, and** http://www.cerc.usgs.gov/clearinghouse/data/usgs_brd_cerc_d_cerc008.html . The Department would not consider suppression of algal growth in the East Gallatin River due to herbicides as a viable rationale for reach-specific nutrient criteria because (a) it is not a naturally occurring environmental variable and (b) future application of BMPs might reduce the amount of herbicides reaching the river and this change could remove the algae-suppressing effect.

2.2 Data Collection Methods

The Department has Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the collection of benthic and phytoplankton algae (both quantitative and qualitative methods)(WQPBWQM-011, 2011), diatoms (WQPBWQM-010, 2011), macroinvertebrates (WQPBWQM-009, 2012), and water quality (WQBWQM-020, 2012), and recommended methods for measuring DO, pH, and DO delta when assessing eutrophication (Suplee and Sada de Suplee, 2011). The Department's 3rd iteration of the Field Procedures Manual (WQBWQM-020, 2012) also summarizes parts of the SOPs most pertinent to field sampling. I recommend these methods be adhered to for all sampling in the East Gallatin River. These documents can be found at: http://deq.mt.gov/wqinfo/qaprogram/sops.mcpx.

A common trait of all the biological sampling methods is the necessity of laying out a short sampling reach, which the Department usually refers to as a 'site'. These short reaches are typically 150 to 300 m in length in wadeable streams, and are delineated at the time of sampling as 40X the wetted width of the stream or a minimum of 150 m. Sample collection at locations where there is a large proportion of the river that is unwadeable requires special consideration and these situations are also addressed in the SOPs.

Collection of DO, temperature, pH, and DO delta are best measured with deployed data sondes (e.g., YSI 6600s). Continuous collection of data via sondes is not needed at all stations but 1 or 2 along the East Gallatin River study reach is recommended for biological characterization. These instruments can be rented seasonally from commercial suppliers.

Details on data collection will need to be elaborated upon in the final Sampling and Analysis Plan (SAP) developed to implement this general study design.

2.3 Recommended Sampling Sites along the East Gallatin River

To address objective 1 and its associated questions, ten sampling sites have been identified along the East Gallatin River between the Bridger Creek and West Gallatin River confluences (**Figure 2-1**). These ten sites are key to the implementation of the empirical approach outlined in **Section 1.2**. Seven sites (A to G; **Figure 2-2**) are intended for more intense chemical and biological sampling, while three (H to J) may be less intensively sampled and are the foundation of the downstream use assessment.

Site A (~0.7 miles downstream of the Bridger Creek confluence, at 45.71516, -111.0358): Establishes water quality and biological conditions near the head of the study reach. Suplee and Watson (2012) indicate that the East Gallatin River upstream of the Bridger Creek confluence should have a higher TP criterion (to account for the natural influence of the Absaroka-Gallatin Volcanic Mountains ecoregion). However, the elevated TP has been diluted out once Bridger Creek joins the river, and the recommended criteria are then the same as for the Middle Rockies as a whole. The site is the natural

starting point for the work. This site also corresponds to site 1 of the mechanistic model (i.e., the QUAL2K model).
Site B (~0.3 stream miles upstream of Bozeman WRF outfall, at 45.72568, -111.06469): Provides a second site to characterize the upper extent of the study reach. It is also not far upstream from the major point source on the river and so can provide a nearby point of reference for any changes occurring downstream of the facility. See also, **Figure 2-3.**

Site C (~0.9 stream mile downstream of the Bozeman WRF outfall, at 45.7284, -111.072): First site downstream of the city of Bozeman WRF discharge. A study shows that the facility's effluent is completely mixed within about 400 ft (0.08 miles) of the discharge (USGS, 1999), although flows at the time of the study were nearly double that of average conditions and nearly 3X the 7Q10. This site— located about 0.9 miles downstream of the discharge— should capture changes in the river due to the effluent, post-mixing. See also, **Figure 2-3.**

Site D (~0.3 stream miles downstream of the Riverside Water & Sewer District ponds, at 45.7363, -111.07105): Conversations with Department staff indicate that the Riverside Water & Sewer District ponds are a likely source of nutrients to the East Gallatin River. By establishing this site (and the one upstream, site C) it should be possible to discern differences in river biology and water quality due to the Bozeman WWTP effluent vs. any subsequent changes due to the ponds. See also, **Figure 2-3**. This site also corresponds to QUAL2K model site 2.

Site E (~0.6 stream miles downstream of the Buster Gulch irrigation diversion, at 45.74765, -111.08195): Site is established below a major water withdrawal to Buster Gulch. The site is established in order to determine if lower water volume is having a measureable effect on water quality or biology of the reach below the withdrawal.

Site F (Lower third of reach at 45.76698, -111.0968): Site will provide data representative of the reach between site E upstream and site G downstream. There are few notable characteristics in this reach of the river (e.g., point sources, tributaries, etc.) and this site will help ascertain the degree to which upstream loads extend their influence downstream.

Site G (upstream of confluence with Hyalite Creek, at 45.7888, -111.1195 [same as site EGRF2]): Establishes water quality and biological conditions near the end of the reach prior to the Hyalite Creek confluence. This site corresponds to a site established in an earlier study on the river (PBS&J, 2011). Any earlier data can be compared to that collected for this study. This site also corresponds to QUAL2K model site 3.

Site H (just upstream of the Dry Creek Irrigation withdrawal, at 45.83059, -111.14617): Nutrient criteria recommended for Hyalite Creek are higher for TP (due to natural geologic sources) and slightly lower for TN (to maintain N limitation) than the reach of the East Gallatin River into which Hyalite flows (Suplee and Watson, 2012). As such, Hyalite Creek is an important water quality change point. This site is intended to discern changes resulting from Hyalite Creek and to characterize the East Gallatin just prior to the Dry Creek irrigation withdrawal. This location is the first site intended for the assessment of downstream uses. This site also corresponds to QUAL2K model site 4.

Site I (just upstream of the Dry Creek Irrigation System return flow, at 45.88921, -111.26408): The Dry Creek Irrigation system is one of, if not the largest, irrigation withdrawals on the East Gallatin River. Irrigation return flows can be a significant source of nutrients and turbidity. The intent of this site is to

characterize the East Gallatin River just prior to the addition of irrigation return flow to the river. The site is part of the assessment of downstream uses, and also corresponds to QUAL2K model site 5.
Site J (just upstream of the confluence with the West Gallatin River, at 45.8923, -111.3286 [same as site EGRF1]): This site is located just upstream of the confluence with the West Gallatin River, and should reflect effects from the Dry Creek irrigation return. The site corresponds to an earlier study site (EGRF1; PBS&J, 2011) and so flow-stage relationships established there can be used; it also is the end of the study reach. The site is part of the assessment of downstream uses, and also corresponds to QUAL2K model site 6.

If resources are a constraint, objective 1 can be addressed with a scaled-down version of this plan. At a very minimum, the Department recommends that sites B, C (or as alternate to C, D), F, G, H, I and J be sampled.

2.4 Sampling Frequency and Duration of Study

Each site should be sampled synoptically at least once during the months of July, August, and September. This will provide good characterization of the sites during baseflow. Two years of data should be collected for the basic biological characterization. This will provide enough information to have some confidence in the biological status of the river during baseflow. If it is intended that the empirical criteria-derivation approach is taken, at least one more year (three total) of baseflow data should be collected at the sites. (Requirements associated with the mechanistic model approach are addressed in **Section 3.0**.) However, if a particular year has unusual high flows ≥ 165% of the long-term average August and September flows, data should not be collected until flows have declined to below this volume. At the USGS gage station at Bozeman on the East Gallatin River (gage No. 06048700), the long-term average flow in August and September is 45 ft^3/sec; thus, until summer and fall flows fall below 74 ft^3/sec, sampling should not occur.

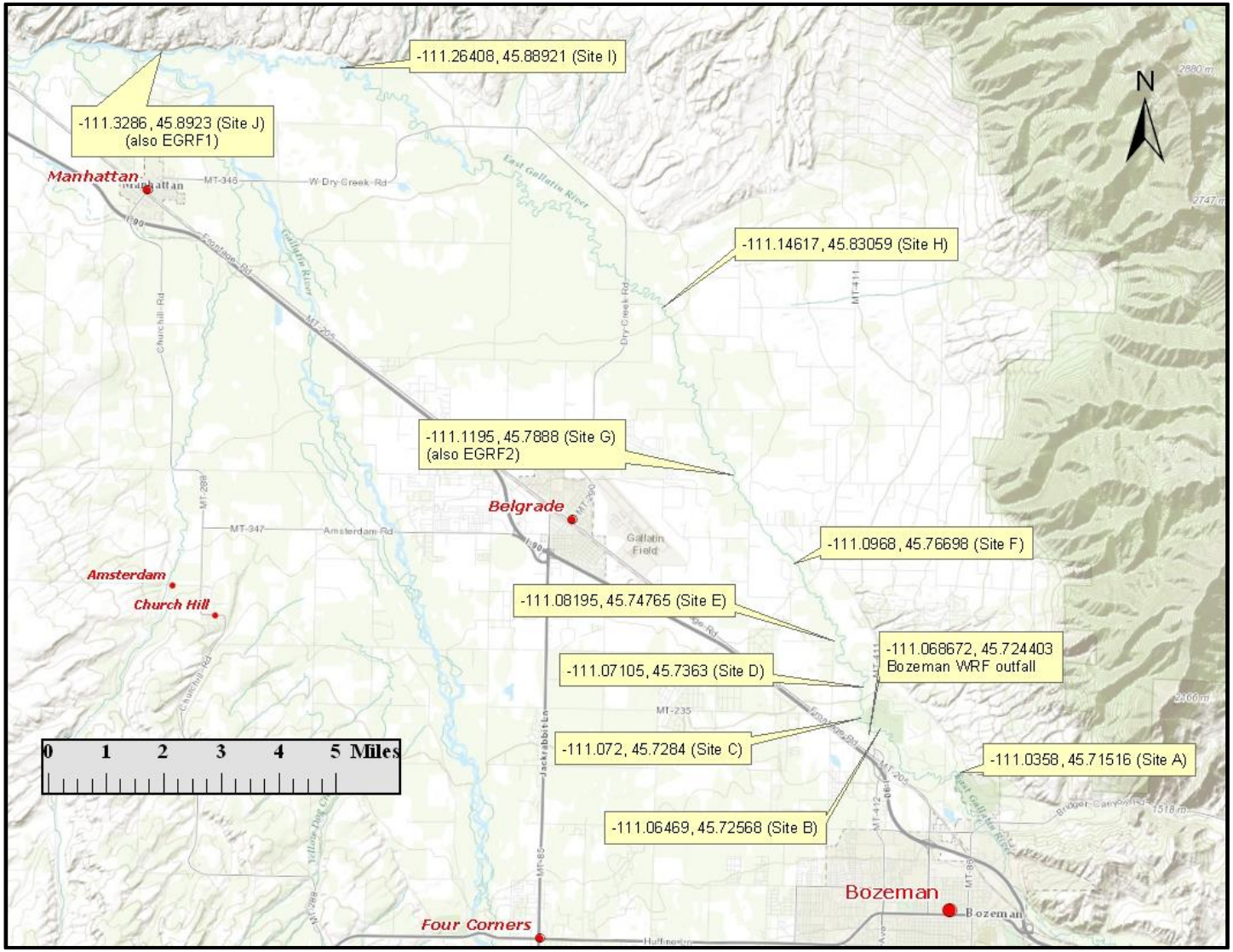

Figure 2-1. Ten biological and water quality sampling sites along the East Gallatin River. Sites A to G are for biological characterization of the East Gallatin River in the reach below the WRF. Sites H to J are for biological characterization <u>and</u> for assessing downstream use protection.

Figure 2-2. Sampling sites A to G along the East Gallatin River between the Bridger and Hyalite creek confluences.

Figure 2-3. Close-up of the three sampling sites around the city of Bozeman WRF discharge. Green dot is USGS gage 06048700.

2.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Due to the number of variables measured (e.g. benthic algae density, macroinvertebrates, diatoms), many different data combinations and outcomes are possible. The Department does not believe that establishing a rigid analysis structure upfront—that is, laying out the exact statistical tests, data aggregation methods, etc.—would be beneficial at this point. There are still a number of unknowns going forward and we must allow ourselves some flexibility in how the data will be interpreted. When statistical tests are, ultimately, carried out, a balance should be sought between type I and II error rates, as has been instituted in other Department stream-assessment procedures (Suplee and Sada de Suplee, 2011). This will seek a balance between error that imposes unneeded cost on the regulated community, and error that leads to degradation of (or lack of improvement to) the river environment (Mapstone, 1995).

2.6 Reach Specific Criteria—Empirical Approach

If it appears that natural environmental factors are keeping benthic algae density below nuisance levels in spite of elevated nutrient concentrations, then it may be possible to develop a reach-specific multiple regression equation involving nitrogen, phosphorus, and the additional environmental variable(s) of relevance, as has been done by others (e.g., Dodds et al., 1997; Biggs, 2000). Whether there will be enough data to develop significant relationships is hard to predict in advance, especially if the reduced-sites approach is selected; but it is safe to say the dataset will be relatively small and will require the assumption that all (or most) sites are independent from one another and samples collected a month apart are temporally independent. The Department has been able to substantiate similar assumptions in other cases (see Appendix A.3, Suplee and Sada de Suplee, 2011).

The multiple regression might take on the following form (Neter et al., 1989):

$$Y = \beta_o + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_n X_n$$

where Y is the dependent (or response) variable, what is being predicted or explained; β_o is a constant or Y-intercept; β_1 is the slope (beta coefficient) for X_1; X_1 is the first independent variable that is explaining the variance in Y; β_2 is the slope for X_2; X_2 is the second independent variable that is explaining the variance in Y; β_3 is the slope for X_3 and X_3 is the third independent variable that is explaining the variance in Y, and on so on for the total number of slope·variables used ($\beta_n X_n$). For purposes of this work, Y equals benthic algae density (mg Chl*a*/m^2, g AFDM/m^2). Likely explanatory variables (βs) would be TN concentration, TP concentrations, TSS concentration, and stream-bottom PAR. This same approach could be used to explain relationships between other response and causal variables (e.g., macroinvertebrate HBI score as the response [Y], TN, TP, and TSS as causal variables [βs]).

2.7 Protection of Downstream Uses

The next step in the process is to determine if downstream uses will be protected by the reach-specific criteria (Box 5, **Figure 1-1**). Nutrients are assimilated longitudinally in streams and elevated concentrations will eventually decline due to biological uptake and adsorption to the sediments. Thus, assessing protection of downstream uses amounts to an evaluation of whether or not the higher nutrient concentrations being allowed upstream will have a deleterious effect downstream.

It is unlikely that any reach-specific criteria in the East Gallatin River would affect the Missouri River. The confluence of the three forks of the Missouri River results in orders-of-magnitude greater summer flows than the East Gallatin River. For example, mean August flow in the Missouri River ~24 miles downstream of the three forks is around 2,747 ft^3/sec, whereas in the Gallatin River at Logan it is 490 ft^3/sec, and

near the mouth of the East Gallatin River it is about 250 ft^3/sec (USGS, 2002; PBS&J, 2011). The most likely impacts from reach-specific nutrient criteria would be in the reach of the East Gallatin River downstream of the Hyalite Creek confluence. The nitrogen criterion recommended for the East Gallatin River between Hyalite Creek and the confluence with the West Gallatin River is 290 µg TN/L, lower than the 300 µg TN/L for the Middle Rockies (Suplee and Watson, 2012). Data suggest that the stream is nitrogen limited (since TP is naturally elevated) and is the reason why a lower TN criterion has been recommended there. A relaxation of the nitrogen criterion upstream of Hyalite Creek could very well lead to use impacts if the nitrogen limitation is, consequently, alleviated. Two approaches (which tie to Box 5 in **Figure 1-1**) can be taken to address downstream effects:

An empirical approach. If the sites along the East Gallatin River downstream from Hyalite Creek (sites H, I, and J) show a general immunity to elevated nutrients (and the reach upstream of Hyalite Creek does as well) due to some natural factor like elevated turbidity, then reach specific criteria in the East Gallatin River could be extended all the way from the Bridger Creek confluence to the confluence with the West Gallatin River, or even beyond, to the confluence with the Missouri River. However if the reach of the East Gallatin River downstream of the Hyalite Creek confluence shows biological impacts/nuisance algae above targets, then reach specific criteria that may be appropriate for the East Gallatin River further upstream will not protect downstream uses, and should not be put in place.

A mechanistic modeling approach using QUAL2K. This approach links to **Section 3.0**. The model would extend the full length of the East Gallatin River, between the Bridger Creek and West Gallatin River confluences to ascertain whether nutrients at a certain concentration, moving downstream from the point where Hyalite Creek confluences with the East Gallatin, would impact the beneficial uses further downstream. Beneficial uses addressed by the model include DO delta, pH delta, and benthic algae density. **Please note that the mechanistic model requires additional types of sampling and sampling sites (tributaries, irrigation withdrawals and returns) than the empirical approach; see Section 3.0.** The next section discusses approaches that can be used to develop a mechanistic model.

3.0 Developing Reach Specific Criteria via the Mechanistic Modeling Approach

Objective: Collect enough data along the East Gallatin River between the Bridger Creek confluence and the West Gallatin River confluence during a low-flow condition to be able to calibrate and confirm a mechanistic QUAL2K model of the study reach.

This objective still requires adequate biological characterization of the reach, as outlined in **Sections 2.1 through 2.5.** Many sites described in **Section 2.0** overlap with model sites described below; this was done in order to optimize sampling. To assure the reach is long enough to be able to judge the validity of the rate coefficients used in the model, the longitudinal distance must be sufficient to observe during calibration the decline in soluble nutrients, conversions to organic from algal death and recycling, etc. It is the Department's judgment that the East Gallatin River can be effectively modeled if the reach from above the Bozeman WRF to the West Gallatin River confluence (**Figure 3-1**) is considered, a distance of approximately 25 stream miles.

Mechanistic models for criteria derivation require a robust set of field observations including streamflow and water-quality data, measurements from continuously deployed sondes (including, at a minimum, dissolved oxygen, pH, temperature, conductivity, and turbidity), and biogeochemical kinetic observations (if possible). The Department has a detailed Quality Assurance Project Plan (Suplee et al., 2006) and a technical report (Flynn and Suplee, 2011) on the use of the QUAL2K model for developing

reach-specific nutrient criteria; the reader is referred to those documents for greater detail. Selected sites are best sampled during one low-flow summer and fall (i.e., a year with flows near the seasonal 14Q5 of the East Gallatin River [McCarthy, 2005] or, alternatively, sequential low-flow summers during the peak of the growing period. Consecutive years with base flows that are below average is preferred but may not always be possible. **If, during the initial biological and water-quality characterization (Sections 2.1 through 2.5), it is found that herbicides are high enough to suppress algal growth, the model will be severely compromised. Therefore, herbicide data are best collected and then assessed in advance of the decision to complete the mechanistic model detailed below.**

3.1 Sites Requiring Water Quality Sonde Deployment

For the QUAL2K model, six sites are recommended (**Figure 3-1**). Sondes could be deployed continuously, or for a week to ten days in middle to late August and then again for another week to ten days in middle to late September, during period of relatively stable flow (or in two sequential Augusts if each has lower-than-average baseflow).

Water quality samples for key model drivers (nutrient concentrations—which include total nitrogen, nitrate+nitrite, ammonia, total phosphorus, and soluble reactive phosphorus; TSS and ISS; alkalinity; hardness; $CBOD_{20}$; Total Organic Carbon [TOC]; and benthic and phytoplankton algae) need to be collected at the six sites, at least once in August and once in September (or in sequential low flow years). These data collections could potentially be synchronized with the data collection in **Section 2.1**.

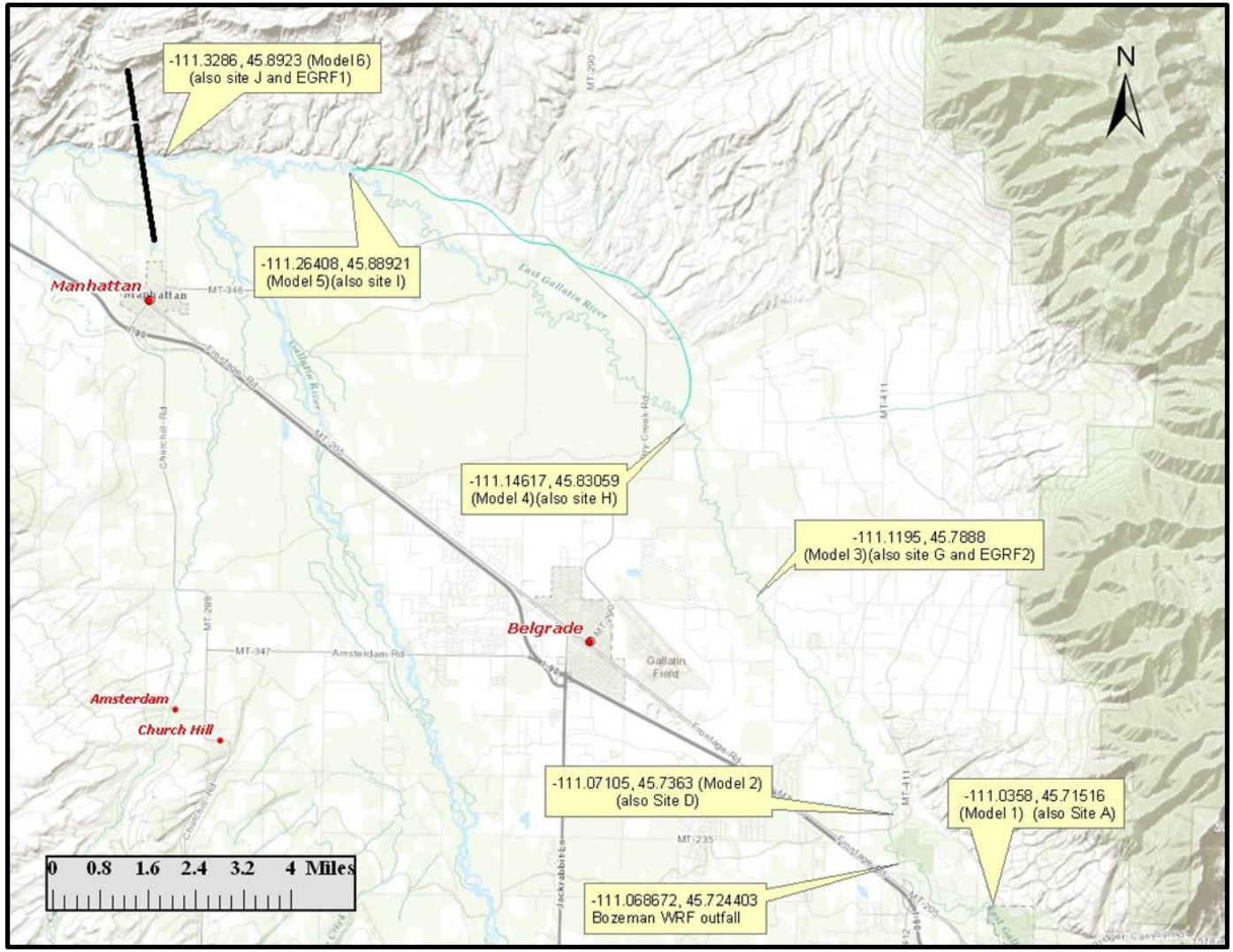

Figure 3-1. Map showing the six main sites along the East Gallatin River needed for the development of the QUAL2K model. Twelve other sampling sites (tributaries, irrigation canal withdrawals, etc.) are needed to develop the model but are not shown on this map.

The sites are:
Model Site 1 (~0.7 miles downstream of the Bridger Creek confluence, at 45.71516, -111.0358; same as Site A): Establishes water quality boundary conditions near the upper-most point of interest on the East Gallatin River based on reasons provided previously (page 9).

Model Site 2 (~0.3 stream miles downstream of the Riverside Water & Sewer District ponds, at 45.7363, -111.07105; same as Site D): For the purposes of the model, this site is intended to represent conditions in the East Gallatin River after the full mixing of Bozeman's WRF effluent discharge and any effects that may be coming from the Riverside Water & Sewer District ponds (see **Figure 2-3**).

Model Site 3 (upstream of confluence with Hyalite Creek, at 45.7888, -111.1195 [same as site G and site EGRF2]): Establishes water quality conditions in the East Gallatin River just before the confluence of Hyalite Creek, which naturally has differing nutrient concentrations (Suplee and Watson, 2012). This site corresponds to a site established in an earlier study (PBS&J, 2011). Any earlier data and flow-stage relationships can be compared to that collected for this study.

Model Site 4 (just upstream of the Dry Creek Irrigation withdrawal, at 45.83059, -111.14617, same as site H): Nutrient criteria recommended for Hyalite Creek are higher for TP (due to natural geologic sources) and slightly lower for TN (to maintain N limitation) than the reach of the East Gallatin River into which Hyalite flows (Suplee and Watson, 2012). As such, Hyalite Creek is an important water quality change point. Model Site 4 is intended to discern changes resulting from Hyalite Creek, and characterize the East Gallatin just prior to the Dry Creek irrigation withdrawal.

Model Site5 (just upstream of the Dry Creek Irrigation System return flow, at 45.88921, -111.26408, same as site I): The Dry Creek Irrigation system is one of if not the largest irrigation withdrawals on the East Gallatin River. Irrigation return flows can be a significant source of nutrients and turbidity. The intent of this site is to characterize the East Gallatin River just prior to the addition of irrigation return flow to the river. Changes in water quality as a result of this inflow will be captured by the next site downstream, model site 6.

Model Site 6 (just upstream of the confluence with the West Gallatin River, at 45.8923, -111.3286 [same as site J and site EGRF1]): This site is located just upstream of the confluence with the West Gallatin River, and should reflect any effects from the Dry Creek irrigation return. The site corresponds to an earlier study site (EGRF1; PBS&J, 2011) and flow-stage relationships established there can be used; it also is the end of the modeled reach.

3.2 Additional Sites Requiring Flow and Water Quality Data

Proper quantification of the water balance, associated mass fluxes, and water quality changes resulting from inputs and outputs to the East Gallatin River are key to a successful modeling strategy. As a result, there are a number of large and small tributaries inflows, irrigation withdrawals and return flows, and point source contributions that need to be quantified. These should be sampled for concentrations of nutrients (total nitrogen, nitrate+nitrite, ammonia, total phosphorus, and soluble reactive phosphorus), TOC, alkalinity, TSS and ISS, hardness, and $CBOD_{20}$ along with instantaneous measurement of temperature, DO, conductivity, pH, and flow.

A list of important hydrologic features that the Department believes should be characterized is shown below. Other tributaries and canals may be included if greater model detail is desired:

1. Bozeman WRF effluent
2. Withdrawal to Buster Gulch irrigation diversion, located ~0.6 upstream of Site E (see **Figure 2-1**); flow only
3. Mouth of Hyalite Creek
4. Withdrawal to Dry Creek irrigation diversion, just downstream of model site 4 (flow only)
5. Mouth of Smith Creek
6. Mouth of Dry Creek
7. Mouth of Ben Hart Creek
8. Mouth of Story Creek
9. Mouth of Cowen Creek
10 Mouth of Gibson Creek
11. Return flow from Dry Creek irrigation diversion (just downstream of model site 5)
12. Mouth of Thompson Creek
13. Mouth of Bull Run Creek

It should be noted that prior to the field assessment, diurnal variation of the discharge of the wastewater from the Bozeman WRF should be considered. If flows from the WRF are significantly variable such that they alter the diurnal flow characteristics of the East Gallatin River itself, further discussions with the Department should be commenced about using a time-variable flow model necessary to represent these changes and their associated effect on water quality.

3.3 Other Data

In addition to the boundary conditions identified previously, forcing functions of air temperature, dewpoint, windspeed, and cloud cover are required to develop incoming PAR estimates and associated heat balances with QUAL2K. The Department has not taken the time to investigate whether suitable information is available from Gallatin Field (or other stations), but it is recommended that such information be assessed to determine availability as well as whether it is appropriate for the East Gallatin River corridor. If suitable information is not available, it is recommended that a meteorological station be placed nearby to measure these inputs for the model.

3.4 Numeric Nutrient Criteria Derivation Process via QUAL2K

A properly calibrated and validated QUAL2K model is necessary for nutrient criteria derivation. Basic criteria for determining when the model is calibrated and validated can be found in Suplee et al. (2006) and are further elaborated upon in Flynn and Suplee (2011). Numeric nutrient criteria can be ascertained by simulating incremental nutrient additions, or more likely in this case nutrient reductions, to the point where water quality standards (e.g., DO, pH), benchmarks (benthic algae density), or other ecological indicators are in compliance /achieved. Detailed discussions of this process are found in Section 13 of Flynn and Suplee (2011).

4.0 Can Beneficial Uses be Supported by Applying Greater Emphasis on Reducing One Nutrient?

The model described in **Section 3.0** can be used to answer certain questions regardless of whether or not the East Gallatin River is found to have nuisance algae levels or other undesirable water quality characteristics. If it is established that algae density is above benchmarks, the model can be used to explore “what if” scenarios, including “what if the city of Bozeman greatly reduced its TP load to the East Gallatin but only reduced its TN load somewhat?”

Figure 4-1 helps illustrates the concept. Taken from Flynn and Suplee (2011), **Figure 4-1** shows growth limitation factors (0-1 scaling factor) from nitrogen, phosphorus, or light at any given point along the river. The horizontal line nearest to the X-axis is the most-limiting factor.

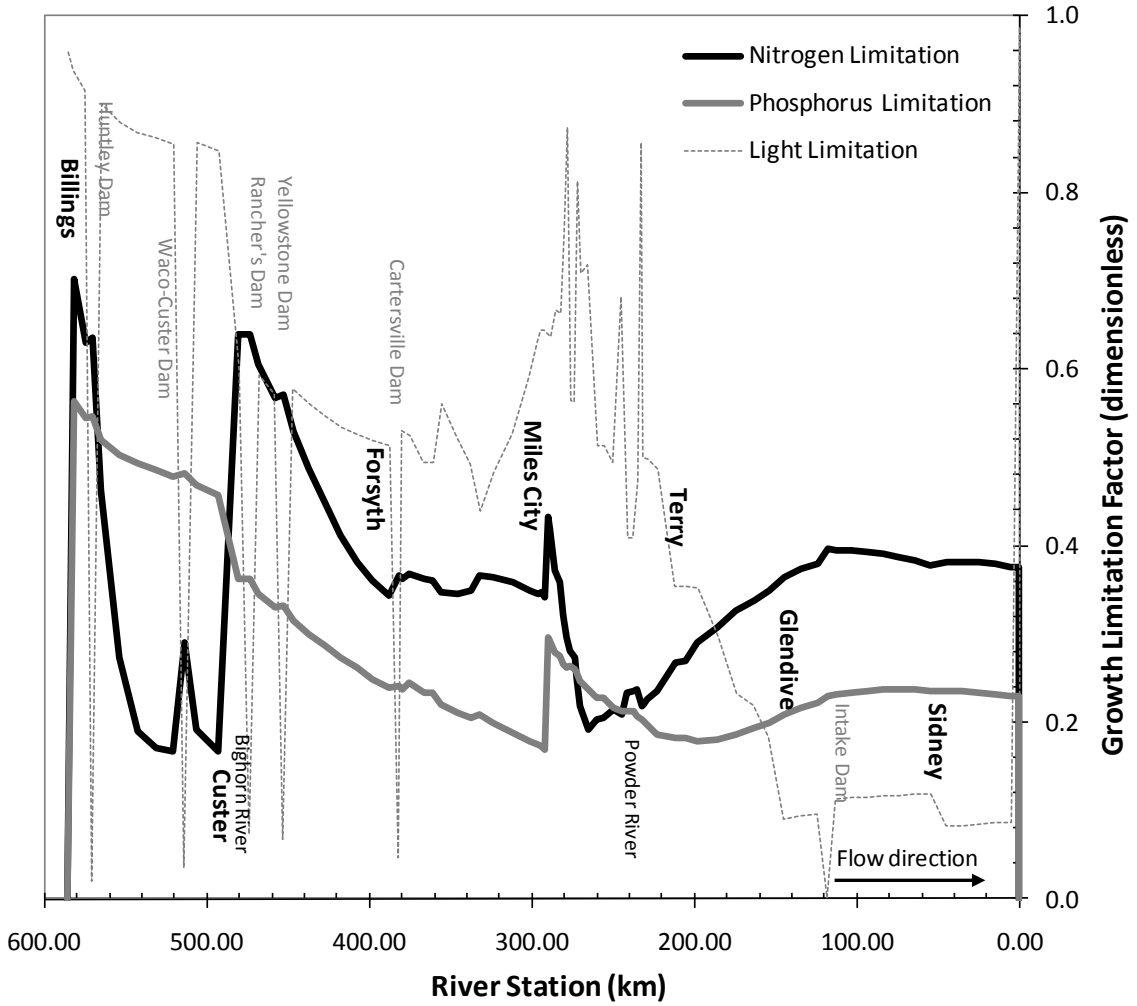

Figure 4-1. QUAL2K model results for nitrogen, phosphorus, and light limitation of benthic algae in the Yellowstone River. From Flynn and Suplee (2011).

What can be ascertained from **Figure 4-1** is that in the case of point-source inputs, the nutrient limitation term can greatly change. In this example, nitrogen limitation is strong downstream of the city of Billings for some distance due to phosphorus load additions from the Billings WWTP (note: the nitrogen load is also large, but the phosphorus load evidently has a much stronger effect because it leads to river phosphorus concentrations far above saturation levels for benthic algae). But the nitrogen-limitation status then changes due to external conditions. So within a model, questions can be posed such as: (1) “What if the Billings TP load were to be greatly reduced such that phosphorus could be made limiting (or co-limiting) with nitrogen?”, (2) “What effect would this have on benthic algae levels in the immediate vicinity of the wastewater discharge?”, and (3) “What would be the effect further downstream?”.

In the case the East Gallatin River, such an exercise would greatly help us understand if a greater reduction in WRF phosphorus (the less expensive nutrient to eliminate) would achieve benthic algae targets by pushing the East Gallatin to P limitation. The model could also be used to see the downstream effects. We know that Hyalite Creek introduces naturally-elevated TP concentrations; in all probability, any TP limitation achieved further upstream would there be lost. The model could also show how changes to WRF treatment systems affect benthic algae. Model results may possibly indicate that a substantial reduction in TN from the WRF is necessary so that nitrogen limitation (and beneficial uses) can be maintained below the Hyalite Creek confluence. Again, the main point is that with the QUAL2K model "what if" scenarios can be evaluated.

5.0 Status Monitoring

If reach specific criteria are developed and it appears that downstream uses will be protected, and those criteria are moving towards adoption by the Board of Environmental Review, the last step in the process is status monitoring. The state-of-the-art in both mechanistic and empirical models is such that they inherently have noise, and confirmation of use-support of the reach-specific criteria is needed to assure stream protection. It is recommended that model sites 1 through 6 be used for this purpose regardless of the method used (mechanistic model or empirical model) to develop the criteria. Data collection should focus on the endpoints of concern (benthic algae density, macroinverebrate metrics, diatom metrics), and (if QUAL2K modeling was used) other endpoints (like pH) that were used in developing the criteria. Presuming that the criteria can be met by changes to the WRF alone, then, after upgrades occur, five years continuous monitoring is recommended at a minimum, to be carried out by the city or its consultants. Five years will also allow enough time to apply robust non-parametric trend statistics to the dataset (Helsel and Hirsch, 2002). Models developed via the methods outlined in **Sections 2.6 and 3.0** may show that, due to nonpoint source contributions, an upgrade to the WRF cannot in and of itself achieve the reach-specific criteria. In this case, the Department and the city should discuss how to proceed with status monitoring. TMDLs for nonpoint source cleanups or application of BMPs generally recognize that implementation will take years (5+), and this should play an important role in determining the monitoring status timeline.

6.0 Budget Estimates

An estimate was made for the cost to complete the data collection and analysis for each of the three major aspects discussed: (1) the biological characterization, followed by either (2) empirical statistical modeling or (3) QUAL2K modeling. Estimates shown are total, that is, the grand total to complete each task including development, calibration, and validation of the models, and any criteria developed thereof. Status monitoring, which would occur afterwards, is not included. Cost estimates were based on 2012 analytical laboratory price sheets, costs for purchasing small equipment or rental of large equipment, etc. They should be viewed as estimates only, as best professional judgment was needed to estimate hours of labor for field data collection, professional data analysis and modeling, etc. See **Appendix A-1** for details.

1. Biological characterization: $75,220

The following are additional costs to be added to that above in order to complete the task:

A. Empirical Model Approach: $30,900
B. QUAL2K Model Approach: $113,635

If the empirical approach is taken, the grand total (biological characterization plus the empirical statistical model) is $106,120. If the minimized study (sites B, D, F, G, H, I and J only) is selected for the

empirical approach, which again includes the biological characterization, the grand total drops to $75,853. If the mechanistic model approach using QUAL2K is taken, the grand total (biological characterization plus the calibrated and validated model) is $188,855. If the minimized study (sites B, D, F, G, H, I and J only) is selected for the biological characterization, the grand total for the QUAL2K model approach drops to $168,500.

7.0 Next Steps

This document has outlined the basic conceptual framework for (a) characterizing the biological and water-quality status of the East Gallatin River (**Section 2.0**), (b) using empirical methods to derive the criteria (**Sections 2.6**), (c) using mechanistic modeling approaches to derive the criteria (**Section 3.0**), (d) consideration of downstream effects (**Sections 2.7 and Section 4.0**), and (e) biological status monitoring (**Section 5.0**). This document provides several pathways and options to study and model the East Gallatin River.

If work outlined in this document is to be undertaken, the next logical step would be to develop a detailed SAP. Potentially, a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) may need to be developed, but that document may be optional so long as Department SOPs are closely adhered to and the SAP provides sufficient detail on topics that are not specifically covered in DEQ SOPs. Further discussion with the Departments Quality Control Officer (Mindy McCarthy; MMcCarthy3@mt.gov) should clarify if a QAPP is needed to further support field sampling. If reach-specific criteria are found to be needed and the QUAL2K model is going to be used, it would be worth further consultation with the Department on a QAPP specific to the model as well as discussions with Department staff during model development.

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Appendix A-1

1. Biological Characterization (2-year study, up to three months per summer). This work is undertaken regardless of preferred modeling approach.

	Benthic Algae (Chl*a*)		Benthic Algae (AFDM)		Macroinvertebrates		Diatoms		WQ (nutrients, TSS)*		Herbicides**	
SITE	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample
A	6	$1,170	6	$300	4	$980	2	$500	6	$960.00	5	$750
B	6	$1,170	6	$300	4	$980	2	$500	6	$960.00	5	$750
C	6	$1,170	6	$300	4	$980	2	$500	6	$960.00	5	$750
D	6	$1,170	6	$300	4	$980	2	$500	6	$960.00	5	$750
E	6	$1,170	6	$300	4	$980	2	$500	6	$960.00	5	$750
F	6	$1,170	6	$300	4	$980	2	$500	6	$960.00	5	$750
G	6	$1,170	6	$300	4	$980	2	$500	6	$960.00	5	$750
H	6	$1,170	6	$300	2	$490	1	$250	6	$960.00	5	$750
I	6	$1,170	6	$300	2	$490	1	$250	6	$960.00	5	$750
J	6	$1,170	6	$300	2	$490	1	$250	6	$960.00	5	$750
Totals:		$11,700		$3,000		$8,330		$4,250		$9,600		$7,500
Subtotals, analytical costs:	$44,380											
YSI 6600 Sonde Rental:	$2,240	Assume 2 sondes, deployed for 1 week each summer for two summers ($560 X 2 X 2).									* TSS	$20.00
Purchase YSI 85	$1,350	For instantaneous DO, temperature, and conductivity. Separate low-cost pH meter can be purchased.									TN	$40.00
Labor in field:	$14,250	Assume a field team of 2 people, 10 sites, 3 hrs/site, average of 4.75 trips per site (for both years), assume $50/hr.									TP	$30.00
Data analysis	$10,000	Assume 1 person, contracted, professional environmental consulting firm									SRP	$30.00
Misc. supplies:	$3,000	macroinvertebrate nets, filters, filter apparatus, vehicle gasoline, etc.									nitrate + nitrite	$25.00
GRAND TOTAL, Biological Characterization:	**$75,220**										total ammonia	$15.00
				Analytical (min sites)	Field labor (min sites)							$160.00
				$28,300	$9,975	GRAND TOTAL, min. sites (B, C, F, G, H, I, J):				$54,865		

**N, P, and S containing pesticides (Method E507 modified).

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2. Statistical Empirical Model (One additional year of data in additional to the biological characterization).

	Benthic Algae (Chl*a*)		Benthic Algae (AFDM)		Macroinvertebrates		Diatoms		WQ (nutrients, TSS)*		Herbicides	
SITE	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample
A	3	$585	3	$150	2	$490	1	$250	3	$480.00	2	$300
B	3	$585	3	$150	2	$490	1	$250	3	$480.00	2	$300
C	3	$585	3	$150	2	$490	1	$250	3	$480.00	2	$300
D	3	$585	3	$150	2	$490	1	$250	3	$480.00	2	$300
E	3	$585	3	$150	2	$490	1	$250	3	$480.00	2	$300
F	3	$585	3	$150	2	$490	1	$250	3	$480.00	2	$300
G	3	$585	3	$150	2	$490	1	$250	3	$480.00	2	$300
H	3	$585	3	$150	2	$490	1	$250	3	$480.00	2	$300
I	3	$585	3	$150	2	$490	1	$250	3	$480.00	2	$300
J	3	$585	3	$150	2	$490	1	$250	3	$480.00	2	$300
Totals:		$5,850		$1,500		$4,900		$2,500		$4,800		$3,000

Subtotals, analytical costs:	$22,550	
YSI 6600 Sonde Rental:	$560	Assume 1sondes, deployed for 1 week for 1 summers ($560 X 1 X 1).
Labor in field:	$6,990	Assume a field team of 2 people, 10 sites, 3 hrs/site, average of 2.333 trips per site, assume $50/hr.
Data analysis:	$15,000	Assume 1 person, contracted, professional environmental consulting firm. This would be final report and emperical model development
Misc. supplies:	$800	macroinvertebrate nets, filters, filter apperatus, vehicle gasoline, etc.
Year 3 Total:	$30,900	
Emperical Model, TOTAL ‡ :	**$106,120**	

Analytical (min sites)	Field labor (min sites)		
$14,735	$4,893	Year 3 Total, min. sites (B, C, F, G H, I, J):	$20,988

Emperical Model, TOTAL, min sites (B, C, F, G, H, I, J) ‡ : $75,853

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3A. QUAL2K Model main sites (data in addition to data from the biological characterization). **Assumes a single year sampling in Aug and Sept.**

	Benthic Algae (Chl*a*)		Benthic Algae (AFDM)		Phytoplankton Chl*a*		Nutrients*		TSS, ISS, Alk, Hardness, TOC†		$CBOD_{20}$	
SITE	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample
1 (same as A)	2	$390	2	$100	2	$130	2	$280.00	2	$210	2	$120
2 (same as D)	2	$390	2	$100	2	$130	2	$280.00	2	$210	2	$120
3 (same as G)	2	$390	2	$100	2	$130	2	$280.00	2	$210	2	$120
4 (same as H)	2	$390	2	$100	2	$130	2	$280.00	2	$210	2	$120
5 (same as I)	2	$390	2	$100	2	$130	2	$280.00	2	$210	2	$120
6 (same as J)	2	$390	2	$100	2	$130	2	$280.00	2	$210	2	$120
Totals:		$2,340		$600		$780		$1,260		$720		$720

*TN	$40.00	†TSS	$20
TP	$30.00	ISS	$20
SRP	$30.00	alkalinity	$10
nitrate + nitrite	$25.00	hardness	$20
total ammonia	$15.00	TOC	$35
total nutrients:	$140.00	*total WQ:*	$105.00

3B. QUAL2K Model, Additional Sites. Assumes a single year sampling in Aug and Sept.

	Benthic Algae (Chl*a*)		Benthic Algae (AFDM)		Phytoplankton Chl*a*		Nutrients*		TSS, ISS, Alk, Hardness, TOC†		$CBOD_{20}$	
Additional Sites	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample	Frequency	Cost/sample
(two flow sites)												
Bozeman WRF	0	$0	0	$0	0	$0	3	$420.00	3	$315	3	$180
Hyalite Cr mouth	2	$390	2	$100	2	$130	2	$280.00	2	$210	2	$120
Smith Cr mouth	2	$390	2	$100	2	$130	2	$280.00	2	$210	2	$120
Dry Creek mouth	2	$390	2	$100	2	$130	2	$280.00	2	$210	2	$120
Ben Hart Cr mouth	2	$390	2	$100	2	$130	2	$280.00	2	$210	2	$120
Story Cr mouth	2	$390	2	$100	2	$130	2	$280.00	2	$210	2	$120
Cowen Cr mouth	2	$390	2	$100	2	$130	2	$280.00	2	$210	2	$120
Gibson Cr moutn	2	$390	2	$100	2	$130	2	$280.00	2	$210	2	$120
Dry Creek Irrig. return	2	$390	2	$100	2	$130	2	$280.00	2	$210	2	$120
Thompson Cr mouth	2	$390	2	$100	2	$130	2	$280.00	2	$210	2	$120
Bull Run Cr mouth	2	$390	2	$100	2	$130	2	$280.00	2	$210	2	$120
Totals:		$3,900		$1,000		$1,300		$3,220		$2,415		$1,380

Subtotals, analytical costs:	$19,635	
YSI 6600 Sonde Rental:	$10,800	Assume 6 sondes, deployed for 2 weeks in Aug and 2 weeks in Sept ($1800/month X 6).
Labor in field:	$12,000	Assume a field team of 2 people, 16 sites, 3 hrs/site, average of 2.5 trips per site (for both months), assume $50/hr. Assume flow meter provided by consultant.
Hobo Weather Station:	$1,200	
Data analysis:	$65,000	To build calibrated and validated model, professional environmental consulting firm with expertise in QUAL2K modeling
Misc. supplies:	$5,000	vehicle gasoline, filters, syringes, Aquarods, etc., contingencies
QUAL2K Model, TOTAL:	**$113,635**	

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