

HJ 74: Water Reuse Study

WATER POLICY INTERIM COMMITTEE
TONI HENNEMAN – MAY 2026

REVIEW OF COMMITTEE REQUESTS FROM MARCH MEETING

On March 26, 2026, the Water Policy Interim Committee heard a panel discussion on the implementation of a wastewater reuse program in Big Sky, Montana used primarily for snow making. During that discussion, multiple potential challenges were raised to implementing a similar-scale reuse system in other locations.

Staff summarized committee questions and requests for more information and reached out to the Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.

QUESTIONS SENT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY:

1. How many locations currently use wastewater treatment systems that may reuse wastewater in some capacity (may be land application or other uses)? How prevalent is reusing wastewater, even on a small scale?
2. For locations that currently reuse wastewater in some capacity, what kind of treatment system is used (i.e. to what level of treatment are these systems able to operate)?
3. How many municipalities or other types of public wastewater systems, such as county water and sewer districts, are currently able to treat wastewater to an A-1 and/or B-1 level? Where are these systems located?

QUESTIONS SENT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION:

1. Do any municipalities currently have reclaimed wastewater reuse allowed as a beneficial use? Are any municipalities already using or set up to start using a reuse system?
2. What is the potential process and timeline for a municipality or public water system, such as a county water and/or sewer district, to file a change of use permit and start reusing reclaimed wastewater in a different way than currently permitted? Are there examples of this happening?
3. Are there other options for a municipality or area with an adequate wastewater treatment system (i.e. the system currently meets water quality requirements for a specific use type) but do not have the correct use permits?
4. Generally, does DNRC see any creative ways to protect downstream users who rely on discharge in an area that would like to reuse that discharge for a different purpose?