

## **My Turn**

### **Clean water top priority for TSV**

**MARK G. FRATRICK**

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Things have slowed down a bit in the Ski Valley after the close of the ski area, but the wheels are already turning as we gear up for infrastructure improvement projects that are planned for this build season.

Like with most years there is a wastewater or a water project on the books; and as always, one of our top priorities is to maintain and preserve the ski valley waters.

There are always questions on the water usage and the village treatment plant, so at this time I wanted to look back and address the My Turn titled "Questions for Carson National Forest leadership" on March 8.

In reference to testing the water in the R'o Hondo, there are several groups or entities that check water quality along the river at various times during the year. We also have random inspections by either the Environment Department or EPA.

We are also required to do a bio-monitoring test during the time of year when the stream flow is at its lowest and the plant flow is at its highest to determine if there is any toxicity to fish. Our discharge limits for total nitrogen are lower than the drinking water standards for nitrates.

The Village of Taos Ski Valley agrees with you "dumping sewage into any river is an archaic and antiquated practice" and that is why Village of Taos Ski Valley doesn't do it now and never has.

In regards to water quality, did you know that the R'o Hondo was classified as impaired over 20 years ago?

Since that time, the upper portion of the R'o Hondo from Williams Lake to the cattle guard just before Valdez has been taken off the list of impaired rivers. It was taken off the list because of strict permit parameters and the quality of wastewater treatment that has been in place for the past 20 years. It also reflects the village's efforts to remove septic tanks from operation and petitioning owners to tie on to the wastewater collections system. I feel the writer speaks from lack of understanding or misinformation on the processes and how a treatment plant works.

You'd be surprised at how much our employees care about the end result, how conscientious they are to make sure the water is as clean as it can be.

We are not perfect, nor do we assume that we will not have problems, but we do the best we can with what we have, and we will continue to do the best we can regardless of the few who refuse to believe we can make a difference .

Education is the key, so here is my proposal to you. I am inviting the writer, *The Taos News* , and up to eight other people to come up for a personal tour of our treatment facility.

We'll give you a general briefing, walk through the plant, and explain the processes to the group. It'll be a tour you'll never forget. I know we'll probably have to do a lottery drawing for the other eight positions because of how many people out there are just wanting, waiting with bated breath to take the tour.

Lastly, for all you treatment plant conspiracy theorists out there, there is no mystery bypass valve that we can open up and "secretly" dump raw untreated sewage into the river.

*Mark G. Fratrack is the village of Taos Ski Valley administrator.*