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Alternative toilets cannot be used on Cougar Island lots

The Idaho Department of Lands has divided Cougar Island in Payette Lake into five residential lots and put them up for auction on Sept. 14. Payette Lake is the sole drinking water source for the McCall area and the sewage from these lots will harm this water.

Cougar Island's IDL plat states sewer is "installed and existing within the lots shown," but this is false. Instead, IDL's appraiser's reports say composting or incinerator toilets must be used on most lots because of failed soil percolation tests. What a contrast.

Unlike Idaho, most states do not allow or heavily regulate composting toilets, because of contaminants in residual waste. Incinerator toilets burn the waste; however, in lakeshore areas, where temperature inversions are common, they cause serious odor problems.

Both toilets treat only human excrement and urine. Nowhere is the treatment of greywater (wastewater from sinks, showers, washing machines, etc.) considered.

Greywater contains toxic chemicals, phosphorus, nitrogen, and pathogens. Its treatment necessarily requires soil absorption, which the failed percolation tests show will result in these contaminants leaching into Payette Lake water.

There is only one conclusion: the state land board must act now to stop the ill-conceived, short-sighted Cougar Island lot auctions.

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