

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Cottonwood Environmental Law Center and Gallatin Wildlife Association (collectively, “Cottonwood”) and Spanish Peaks Mountain Club (“Spanish Peaks”) are pleased to announce they have settled Cottonwood’s lawsuit. In February 2022, Cottonwood sued Spanish Peaks in the United States District Court for the District of Montana, claiming Spanish Peaks violated the Clean Water Act by overirrigating its golf course in Big Sky and allowing reclaimed water to leak from a storage pond on the golf course. Spanish Peaks denied Cottonwood’s allegations and maintains that it has always complied with the Clean Water Act and Montana’s laws and regulations. A settlement is not an admission of the allegations in the lawsuit, but it allows the parties to avoid a protracted dispute and costly legal fees. Although the parties continue to disagree on the merits of the lawsuit, they have agreed to put aside their differences in favor of a resolution that everyone agrees will benefit water quality in the Gallatin River watershed.

Spanish Peaks has agreed to replace the liner of its golf course holding pond and to limit its irrigation of the golf course. Spanish Peaks will report its irrigation activities to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and Cottonwood annually. Spanish Peaks will monitor water quality levels above and below the golf course and will report its monitoring results to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and Cottonwood. Spanish Peaks has further agreed to fund water quality-improvement projects in the watershed, including a study of nutrient reduction and water conservation in the Big Sky area by the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology. The parties are confident that their settlement is in the best interests of the environment and the Big Sky community as a whole.