

Bitterroot National Forest Annual Report 2016



Project Title: Watershed Improvement through Sediment Reduction in Upper Sleeping Child Creek & Rye Creek	
Organization: Bitter Root Water Forum	
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Bitter Root Water Forum (BRWF), through the stewardship agreement with Bitterroot National Forest, completed 8.11 miles and removed 19 culverts in 2015. All work in section 3 and half of section 11 was completed.

In 2016, BRWF continued under contract with Price Contracting out of Stevensville to implement excavation and revegetation work. The excavator operator, Nick, was accompanied by one to three laborers throughout the project who implemented the revegetation efforts. BRWF Assistant Project Manager, Katie Vennie, procured weed-free straw, fertilizer and seed from local sources and the Forest Service.

Project implementation for 2016 commenced in June and continued until completion in early August. With assistance from the Forest Service, BRWF supervised work ensuring that standards of both BRWF and the Forest Service were met.

Work in 2016 included 7.93 miles of full recontouring, 1.24 miles of partial recontouring, the removal of a log bridge and 23 culverts. BRWF determined with guidance from Bitterroot National Forest that one road measuring 0.37 miles was naturally recovered to the point that attempting to treat would cause more disruption than benefit.

In July volunteers accompanied Katie into the field and helped spread certified weed free straw mulch. The work was challenging as it required a lot of walking on the steep uneven surfaces of recontoured roads but was rewarding when the volunteers saw how much they accomplished and the benefits of this project. This was a wonderful opportunity to get some of our most active volunteers out to this project and see the work that had been done.

This project attracted the attention of multiple funding sources including the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, The State of Montana Future Fisheries program, Local and State Trout Unlimited, the Forest Service, and local donors.

BRWF has established photo points throughout the project area as a baseline for project monitoring. Sites were selected to give a good overall sense of progress and recovery. These include overview of sections, stream crossings, varying aspects, and varying slopes both of the road and surrounds area. Due to the difficulty of accessing some of the most impactful sites of the project BRWF purchased a drone with picture and video capabilities to assist in monitoring. Photos will continue to be taken at intervals to monitor vegetation. WEPP modeling will be conducted to determine load reduction estimates and soil samples will determine nutrient content.

To expand project reach and educate citizens about this and other areas of concern in the watershed, BRWF gave a presentation to residents along the East Fork about BRWF, NPS issues and the Watershed Improvement Project. BRWF also completed a Fall Newsletter featuring information/education on the Watershed Improvement through Sediment Reduction in Upper Sleeping Child Creek & Rye Creek project.