



Flathead National Forest

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News Release

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Forest Service Signs Decision for Watershed Restoration in Swan Valley

Bigfork, MT –April 21st – Jim and Cold Creek watersheds in the Swan Valley provide important bull trout spawning and rearing habitat. Thirty years ago logging and road development activities impacted watershed conditions and reduced fish habitat quality. As a result Montana Department of Environmental Quality classified Jim Creek as “impaired” and other groups expressed concern about Cold Creek as well. In recent years a number of activities such as replacing culverts and bridges, and eliminating certain point-sources of erosion have been implemented resulting in a general improvement of these watersheds.

To help accelerate watershed restoration the Forest Service signed a decision on April 15, 2016 called the Chilly James Restoration Project. This project focuses on restoration work to mitigate impacts of roads on watershed condition. The decision for Forest Service system roads will decommission either passively or actively 26.2 miles of road, put into long term storage 4.8 miles, relocate 0.2 miles, and implement road Best Management Practices on 20.9 miles such as blading, clearing ditches and replacing undersized culverts.

The draft decision for Chilly James was published in February of 2016. Two objections were filed concerning the draft decision. Resolution of the points raised in the objections was achieved through a meeting between the Forest Service and objectors.

On the ground restoration work is expected to take several years. A public works contract will be advertised in the near future to accomplish planned work for 2016.

Swan Lake District Ranger, Rich Kehr, said that planning for restoration and subsequent contract work has been a partnership effort and part of the broader Southwest Crown of the Continent collaborative landscape restoration effort. “Montana Department of Environmental Quality and Swan Valley Connections played important roles in the successful outcome of this project. The interagency goal is to achieve restored watershed conditions with Jim Creek delisted from the State list of impaired water bodies, and both Jim and Cold Creek meeting all beneficial water uses.”

Please visit the Flathead National Forest web page to find a copy of the decision and environmental assessment. If you wish to find out more, contact Beth Gardner or Rich Kehr at the Swan Lake Ranger District, (406) 837-7500.

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