

## 2005 Fisheries Restoration Project Summary – Lolo NF

**State:** Montana  
**National Forest:** Lolo National Forest, Ninemile Ranger District  
**Project Name:** Ninemile Creek, Martina Reroute

### Project Purpose / Objectives:

Roads are often contributors to both direct and indirect fish and watershed effects. These effects may include increased water runoff and sediment delivery to streams, reduced vegetation and overhead cover close to the stream, confined channels lacking floodplain, and reduced wood recruitment and habitat simplification. The upper Ninemile was the site of large stand replacement fires in 2000. In the years after this fire a Post Burn EIS identified both vegetation treatments and watershed improvement opportunities ripe for implementation. One such project was the reroute of a section of road along Ninemile Creek and decommissioning the old road segment to reclaim some ability for the channel and floodplain to operate in a much less constricted fashion and to reduce direct sediment input from the failing road. Specific objectives include: reduce channel confinement, bank erosion and road surface sediment delivery, and to reestablish a floodplain and riparian vegetation.



### Work Performed:

A contract crew that was also doing road decommissioning in the upper Ninemile watershed did a partial recontour of nearly one half mile of road directly adjacent to upper Ninemile Creek. The site was mulched with straw and seeded with native annual grasses to stabilize the site. This work will be followed up on in 2007 using a mechanized attachment to an excavator to plant both rooted plants and cuttings of willows and dogwoods to facilitate near-channel re-establishment of the riparian vegetation.

### Expected Benefits:

Channel function, including spring flows accessing floodplain surfaces and lateral movement of the channel are expected to help

Example of a confined and eroding section of road on main Ninemile Creek where the road has since been relocated. Every several years additional riprap would need to be placed in the channel to prevent road failure. The sediment, riparian, confinement impacts are obvious.

re-establish a channel segment that evolves to where in-stream habitat becomes riparian vegetation improved local

more complex and stable. As becomes re-established over time,

temperatures are expected. This is an area of extensive winter anchor ice (channel freezing from the channel bed and up) formation that will be expected to improve as the floodplain and its vegetation

evolves. This area will also serve as a demonstration for road relocation and the positive changes to a stream channel that can occur when major stressors such as riparian and channel confining roads are removed.



Looking downstream at obliterated and partially recontoured road segment where past road confinement effects were extensive.