

## FLESHMAN CREEK RESTORATION UPDATE



Enterprise photos by Shawn Raecke

State and local officials involved with the Fleshman Creek Restoration Project take a tour of the project on Thursday. Pictured from right are Kevin Feldman, project manager with CTA, Jim Darling, habitat bureau chief with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, Scott Opitz, local fishery biologist with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, Mark Lere, program officer with Future Fishery Improvement Program, and DeWitt Dominick, a geomorphologist with ERM.

# Officials like what they see on Fleshman

By Natalie Storey  
Enterprise Staff Writer

Fleshman Creek showed off its new curves Thursday as Park County and state officials toured work that has been done so far in the \$3.2 million project.

Contractors and engineers led the tour, explaining improvements to restore habitat and mitigate flooding on two miles of the creek. Visitors clomped through the mud along the creek from Main Street to H Street, asking questions and expressing satisfaction with the work.

County Commissioner Jim Durgan, who fought long and hard for the project, said he thought it had been well designed and raved about the creek's new meanders in places where it used to be "swamp." The new banks will provide easier access to the creek for schoolchildren and others for education and recreation, he said.

"I think it's going to be something the community can really be proud of for a long time to come," Durgan said.

County Commissioner Clint Tinsley, the former public works director for the City of Livingston, noted four crossings where sewer lines were either exposed or ran through the creek that have now been replaced.

County Commissioner Marty Malone also appeared pleased with the work.

"I think it's much, much improved," Malone said.

The project is being paid for in part by a \$2.28-million Federal Emergency Management Agency grant the county received in 2009. County staff and grant writers have been working on the project for about 10 years. It includes replacing the culverts at Main, H, C, E, F and



DeWitt Dominick, left, talks with Kristen Galbraith, Park County grant administrator, and Caleb Minnick, on-site inspector with CTA during a tour of the Fleshman Creek, Thursday afternoon.

Geyser streets, in addition to relocating sewer lines, new lift stations for sewage and stream restoration work.

DeWitt Dominick, a geomorphologist with Environmental Resources Management, explained work he helped design and complete along the banks of the creek. Engineers used a netting fabric made from coconut fiber to refashion the banks and create the meanders, he said.

The fiber is stuffed with soil, gravel, rocks and other material native to the area, much like a burrito, Dominick said. Then the "soil burrito" is seeded and eventually plants that grow from it will anchor the material to the bank. The coconut fiber will biodegrade, Dominick said.

"It's an erosion control medium that allows us to construct a new stream bank," he said. "It also provides a growing medium for native vegetation."

The channel of the creek itself, which

is an old channel of the Yellowstone River, was deepened and widened to help water flow more smoothly through it. The creek will now be between a foot and a half and 2 feet deep. The design also created flood plains where the creek can rise up during times of high water, said Scott Opitz, a fisheries biologist for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks who has been helping with the project.

DeWitt said contractors tried to save most of the trees along the bank because they provide erosion control and bank stabilization. Workers embedded branches and sticks in the banks in some places to help maintain pools for fish and create cover. They also made riffles — the shallow areas of a creek where the most bugs live — by filling in some small stretches with gravel.

Before they could begin with stream restoration, contractors said they spent quite a bit of time cleaning out the creek. Caleb Minnick, a civil engineer for CTA Architects Engineers, said they found tons of tires and car parts.

Also, curiously, contractors found quite a few bricks at the bottom of the creek, Minnick said.

"I could have almost built a whole house with all the bricks we pulled out of there," he said.

When the crew was installing new sewer lines behind the middle school, they came across the old cement foundations for the drive-in movie theater, Minnick said.

Kristen Galbraith of Nittany Grantworks said the contractors are ahead of schedule, but have until June 30 to complete work. Officials are hoping to turn the water back on in the creek in May, she said.