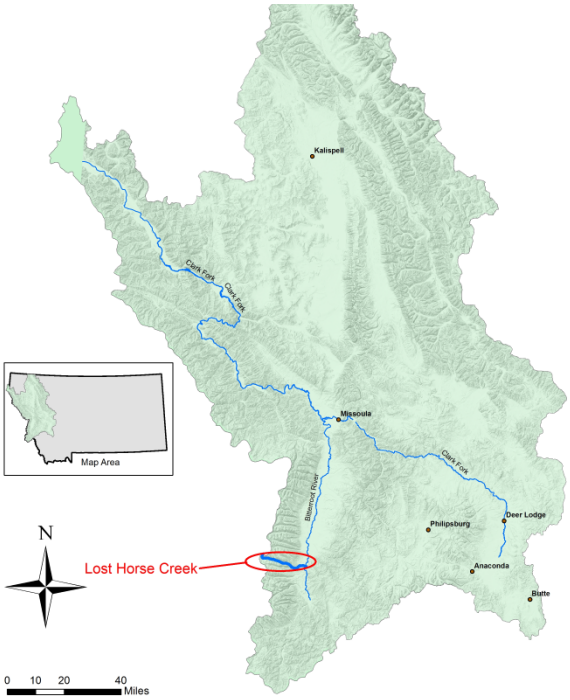
Streamflow Spotlight:
Lost Horse Creek



For the first time since 1938, lower Lost Horse Creek is connected to the Bitterroot River all summer long.

ABOUT THIS STREAM:

- Significant tributary of the Bitterroot River ~10 miles south of Hamilton
- Stronghold for threatened bull trout; supports good numbers of westslope cutthroat trout
- Important source of water for agriculture, but beginning in 1938, a seasonal irrigation dam has severed the lower creek from the river each summer

LOW FLOW ISSUES AND IMPACTS:

- Seasonal dam completely cut off the lower creek from Bitterroot, caused high fish mortality, and degraded water quality
- Low and decreased periods of flow greatly inhibit native trout migration, adversely impacting the Bitterroot River fishery

WHAT WE'RE DOING:

- Collaborated with Ward Irrigation District on a major project to improve irrigation diversion
- Restored ~570 million gallons of water/yr, removed migration barrier, greatly reduced fish mortality, reduced sediment, reconnected creek to river
- Working with landowners to increase instream flow

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