

Riffles

FALL 2017 FIELD UPDATE

CLARK FORK



COALITION

KEEPING CREEKS WET WHEN TEMPS SOAR

Western Montana's snowy winter and wonderfully wet spring evaporated in a hurry in June-July when a prolonged heat wave gripped the region. The sudden transition caused the Clark Fork and its tributaries to drop faster than we've documented in many years, spiking water temps to highly-stressful and/or lethal levels for native trout (mid-60s to 70+F).

We recently completed two important projects in the Upper Clark Fork that go to the heart of this problem by keeping water flowing when fish, wildlife, and ranchers need it most. We worked with Andy and Marilee Paddock to purchase a ~73 million gallons per year water right on Mill Creek, which supports genetically pure cutthroat trout in its upper reaches. On Lost Creek, an important brown trout spawning stream, we completed a 4-year project with the Lampert family that puts more than 200 million gallons of water back in the stream each summer.

These projects help ensure fish can move out of the mainstem river when it reaches lethal levels, allowing the stream to function as a "climate shield" against the heat. They also improve water quality, lower stream temperatures, provide small fish a place of refuge from predators, and facilitate spawning and rearing. Through snorkel monitoring we've already seen the results, documenting thousands of fish using pools in Lost Creek that would not have existed in previous years.

But such fixes don't come quickly or easily. Flow restoration projects are typically years in the making. Mill and Lost Creeks benefited this summer because of work that Coalition members like you made possible back in 2013. Your support this year will reap benefits in 2018, 2019, and beyond. The bottom line: with a little help, strategically applied, our native and wild trout have a fighting chance, even during the hottest summers.

clarkfork.org

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This photo has been years in the making! The Lampert family established a split season lease that will put much needed water back into Lost Creek. Hans Lambert and Will McDowell seal the deal.

MORE INFO: clarkfork.org/get-involved/landowners

GET YOUR FEET WET

Our new **Trash Line** lets you report trash when you see it, and/or be part of a rapid-response cleanup crew when troublesome trash is called in. We supply coordination, supplies, and trash pick-up.

Check it out today at clarkfork.org/get-involved/trashline/ or text **TRASHY** to 33222 to sign up and receive more information.



CLARK FORK COALITION
TRASHLINE



Off Route Photography



Getting the data: How do we know if streams are ok? Each summer we monitor streams across the basin to track flow, temp, and depth to ensure things are flowing as they should. Here, Jed Whiteley monitors Ninemile Creek.

SUMMER CHECK-UPS

Monitoring the vital signs of our creeks and streams tells us how the Clark Fork basin is faring and whether our restoration projects are making a difference. You've helped us keep billions of gallons of water in hundreds of miles of creeks throughout the basin and we want to ensure habitat and water quality are improving as expected. We currently record streamflow, temperature, and water depth at 42 monitoring stations on 22 streams twice-monthly from May through October, getting photo documentation while we're there. We also snorkel-monitor some creeks to gather data on fish numbers and behavior, and we track real-time

flow data via telemetry stations on select streams in the Bitterroot and Upper Clark Fork, allowing us to intervene before conditions get critical.

Your support enables us to reach these creeks, collect and analyze data, and repair and replace monitoring equipment – the essential tools that keep trout streams healthy.

Thank you!



Snorkel monitoring at Lost Creek

MORE INFO: clarkfork.org/our-work/what-we-do/monitor-watershed-health

(MORE) GOOD NEWS

1. Victory on exempt wells!

No more excessive, unregulated pumping of precious groundwater for massive subdivision projects. With the defeat of some ill-advised legislation this winter, we kept in place a Supreme Court decision that says developers must follow the rules and respect senior water rights (just like the rest of us) when it comes to pumping groundwater. It's a big win with state-wide, long-term benefits for Montana's water resources. Thanks for your emails and calls that make it possible! More info: clarkfork.org/our-work/what-we-do/current-campaigns/exempt-wells

2. Buyer's remorse? Not a bit.

Here in Missoula, we've staked our livelihoods on water. We grew our town along the banks of the Clark Fork and its trout-filled tributaries. And on June 22 we became owners of our own water system. That's a very big deal. Why? Because against all odds and national trends, we stared down powerful international corporations and pulled off a win. And because public ownership is about our community's future, and its most precious, finite, and essential ingredient: water. And finally, because public ownership of the newly-minted "Missoula Water" also puts our community – not some far-away, disinterested party – in charge of managing and protecting alpine lakes and native trout streams in the Rattlesnake Wilderness.

As water wars heat up in an increasingly thirsty West, we'll be glad those precious waters aren't on the auction block. It wasn't easy, and it didn't come cheap. But taking charge of our own water future is worth every penny we just spent to get make it happen. Read about this David vs. Goliath story in *The Nation*: <http://bit.ly/2uRVR5V>

Share holiday cheer and your support of the river at Missoula's best holiday party, **Friday December 1st.**

..... **HOLD THE DATE!**

Design by Kerry Morse