

\$2.28 million

County gets grant for Freshman

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Park County has been selected to receive \$2.28 million in grants for the Freshman Creek Flood Mitigation Project.

Montana's Disaster and Emergency Services announced Monday it has been notified by FEMA Headquarters that four pre-disaster mitigation grants totaling more than \$3.6 million have been selected for further review and funding, pending environmental review.

According to Park County's grant writer Lori Benner, the cost of the Freshman Creek project is estimated at \$3.04 million. The FEMA grant will cover 75 percent that. To get the grant money, Park County will chip in \$760,000.

A total of six pre-disaster mitigation grant applications from the state and local jurisdictions were submitted by Montana Disaster and Emergency Services last December for the 2009 Hazard Mitigation Assistance Program.

FEMA chose to award one of four grants to Park County, but before any money can be used, FEMA must conduct an environmental review, according to Benner.

She said the review could take from six months to a year to complete, giving her and the county time to raise the county's portion of the project.

Benner has already secured \$615,000 through various grants and pledges from Park County, the Livingston School District and Trout Unlimited.

"This is a huge deal," she said. "FEMA had \$50 million to give away, and Montana received \$3 million of it and Park County got \$2.28 million."

According to Benner, FEMA gives mitigation grants to prevent disasters before they happen. The cost of preventing a disaster is often less than the cost of cleaning up after one, she said.

According to a recent FEMA news release, independent studies have proven that every dollar spent on mitigating natural hazards such as flooding, wildfire in the urban interface, earthquake retrofits, or severe summer or winter weather saves four dollars in future disaster recovery costs for the nation as a whole.

Other groups that received FEMA grant money are Custer County, Yellowstone County and the State of Montana.

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Livingston Enterprise

April 21, 2009