



Forest Service News Release

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Sleeping Child Bridge Replacement Project Update

Hamilton, MT, June 27 — The Bitterroot National Forest is experiencing delays in the process of installing a new Bottomless Arch Structure on the Darby/Sula Ranger District's Sleeping Child Creek. The work had begun the week of April 17th, with the plan that installation would be complete by the time the snow had melted off Forest Road 273 (White Stallion Road). With the continued high amount of rain and the presence of groundwater, the dewatering of the Sleeping Child crossing on Forest Road 273, as necessary for the installation of the new Bottomless Arch Structure, remains a challenge. Forest engineers continue to work with contract crews to expedite the installation as much as possible to complete installation and make the road passable again.

The contractor has re-mobilized to the site on June 20th to re-assess the potential for effective dewatering of the channel. Additional pumps are being acquired and stream diversion measures are being implemented to the best of their ability and availability of resources. Once effective dewatering can be achieved, it is estimated crews can have the structure installed and the road open in 3 weeks. Traffic Control remains in place at the project site and signage posted at the intersection of North Fork Rye and Rye Creek Road, South of Darby, alerting travelers that the loop route to Sleeping Child Road cannot be completed.

We ask the public to leave signage in-place and standing on the road so that drivers will take note of the information before proceeding with planned travel.

The Forest is replacing the bridge at this location after showing signs of deteriorated condition in recent bridge inspections. It was also determined the current bridge was not sufficient in size and during high runoff had posed risks to the road. Besides increasing stream flows, the new bottomless arch incorporates native stream channel preservation, improves the passage of fish and other aquatic organisms, and greatly increased safety and sight distance with better road alignment and curve widening.

For more information, contact the Darby Ranger District at (406) 821-3913. Stay in touch with us through www.facebook.com/DiscoverTheBitterroot.

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