

SUN RIVER WATERSHED GROUP AWARDED \$1.7M FOR MUDDY CREEK PROJECT



Photo: Drone photography shows erosion and old channels along Muddy Creek. Photo courtesy of Montana MapWorks.

The Sun River Watershed Group (SRWG) has been awarded a grant for over \$1.7M for improvements on Muddy Creek, a tributary of the Sun River. The US Department of the Interior announced this award yesterday as part of \$26.7 million Bipartisan Infrastructure funding to safeguard local water supplies. SRWG is one of 14 recipients of water efficiency project funds across eight western states – and the only project selected for funding in the State of Montana.

“We are so appreciative that this program saw the benefits in the Muddy Creek project,” says SRWG Executive Director, Tracy Wendt. “This grant will fund crucial work benefiting water quality and water supply. It’s really the first big step in our new Strategic Plan to improve stream flows, water security, habitat, and other natural resource values across the Sun River watershed.”

The Muddy Creek Restoration and Resilience Project, Phase I, is the first project to be initiated as a result of the recently completed Muddy Creek Master Plan (available at www.sunriverwatershed.org/resources). This project, located west of Great Falls near Vaughn, will address degradation on approximately three miles of Muddy Creek through bank stabilization, revegetation, in-channel structures, and a variety of treatments designed to reduce erosion, improve fish and wildlife habitat, and restore natural hydrologic processes. The project also includes upgrades to Greenfields Irrigation District (GID) infrastructure at J-Wasteway. These upgrades will improve GID’s ability to manage irrigation water, resulting in a reduction of



operational losses and improvements to water storage and conveyance, which will be especially beneficial in low water years and times of drought.

SRWG board of directors member Linda Berger is excited for the project: “I became active with SRWG about 3 years ago as part of a group of landowners that met with Tracy to look for solutions to various problems that were happening along Muddy Creek. This project arose from those meetings and time spent talking to stakeholders large and small along the creek. We are really proud to be leading this big project that will benefit so many.”

SRWG acquired these funds through the US Bureau of Reclamation’s new [WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Project](#) program. The program provides cost-share for projects that meet the program criteria, and SRWG will be responsible for acquiring 25% of the project cost through non-federal funding and in-kind contributions to the project. SRWG is in the process of securing this 25%, which is just under \$600,000.

The Sun River Watershed Group is a local non-profit with a mission to collaboratively protect and restore the resources of the Sun River Watershed and its communities. SRWG began as a grass-roots organization focused on improving water quality in Muddy Creek – at the time, one of the largest known sources of nonpoint source pollution in Montana. SRWG worked with partners to make many improvements to Muddy Creek and expanded work to include the full watershed and to address other natural resource issues in addition to water quality. The Sun River begins in the Bob Marshall Wilderness west of Augusta and meets the Missouri River in Great Falls.

For more information, contact Tracy Wendt at tracy@sunriverwatershed.org. Be sure to visit www.sunriverwatershed.org and [Facebook](#) for information on projects and events hosted by SRWG.