



Town of Estes Park
P.O. Box 1200
Estes Park, Colorado 80517
www.estes.org

Media contact:
Kate Rusch
Town of Estes Park
Public Information Officer
970-577-3701

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Fish Creek public infrastructure repairs and stream corridor master planning underway

Two flood recovery projects are underway in the Fish Creek corridor, with the long-term goal of restoring public infrastructure and increasing health and resiliency of the stream corridor.

Fish Creek Public Infrastructure Project

The infrastructure repairs will take place in two phases, with the first phase including design and replacement of 1,500 feet of water line and crossings, installation of concrete encased electric lines at stream crossings, and replacement or relocation of about 23 sewer manholes and 6,000 feet of sewer line. Because utilities are located beneath the roadway, they must be completed before reconstruction of the road. Phase two will include repairing the road, public access roads, and the multi-use trail. Larimer County is the infrastructure repair project manager, with a technical advisory committee consisting of the Town of Estes Park, Upper Thompson Sanitation District, the Estes Valley Recreation and Park District, and design consultants at HDR Engineering, Inc. Funding has been secured for these improvements. Construction for the utilities is expected in late 2014 and the roadway and trail in late 2015, assuming an expedited federal review and approval process.

Fish Creek Stream Corridor Master Planning Project

A second major project affecting the Fish Creek corridor is the stream corridor master planning effort, which will occur separately from and be coordinated with the infrastructure project. This effort is guided by the Fish Creek Coalition of residents and businesses, the Town of Estes Park and the consultants at Walsh Environmental. This effort will identify and rank scientifically defensible recovery and restoration projects that are supported by the community, protect life and property from flood and geomorphic hazards, and improve stream health. This will be a risk-based approach that implements lessons learned from Hurricane Sandy's recovery. The 2013 flood may have exceeded a 500-year event, and drastic changes to the floodplain require careful planning. The ultimate result of master planning efforts and subsequent implementation will be increased resiliency in the community, economy, and river systems. Master planning is fully funded and the Town is considering all available options to fund implementation of priority master plan projects.

Coordination between the two projects

Project partners include agencies and consultants that are leading both the infrastructure and master planning projects. The partners are coordinating and sharing information to best inform each project.

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Additionally, the partners have implemented several short-term temporary projects to best protect the destabilized, sandy Fish Creek corridor during peak flows this runoff season.

Approximate timeline of Fish Creek corridor flood-recovery efforts – past, present and future:

September -- December, 2013: Immediately after the September, 2013 flood, temporary repairs to the road, crossings and utilities were constructed by Larimer County, the Town of Estes Park, Upper Thompson Sanitation District and other utilities including natural gas, cable and telephone services.

September, 2013 – Now: Since the flood, officials have conducted detailed damage assessments and surveys of the corridor to assist permanent repair planning. In this time, funding sources have been identified for both the design and construction of public infrastructure project and risk reduction/floodplain management and master planning efforts, with most requiring a match in funding from the local agencies.

February – May, 2014: Several short-term, temporary projects have been implemented to protect the destabilized, sandy Fish Creek corridor during peak flows this runoff. The Fish Creek Coalition of residents and businesses has formed to develop a stream corridor master plan, and the coalition held its first meeting in April. Ecologic and flood and geomorphic hazard assessment fieldwork has been completed.

Now – September, 2014: The Fish Creek Coalition and master planning consultants at Walsh Environmental will identify and rank scientifically defensible recovery and restoration projects that are supported by the community, protect life and property from flood and geomorphic hazards, and improve stream health. The next public meeting will be scheduled in June.

Now – Spring, 2015: The infrastructure team will develop a design for phase one of the infrastructure project – repairs to the utilities. The first public meeting was held May 14; another public meeting will be scheduled this summer. Extensive environmental assessments are included in this process. Tentatively, the team will finish the design this summer, receive approval from federal funding agencies, and begin utilities construction for completion prior to spring runoff in 2015.

June, 2014 – Fall, 2015: Considering information from the stream corridor master plan, phase two of the infrastructure project will address the design and reconstruction of Fish Creek Road and the multi-use trail. The design process is expected to take place from this summer through Spring, 2015. This will include more public input and outreach to stakeholders. Construction of the road and trail is expected to begin in late Fall of 2015. In the meantime, the temporary road will be maintained.

Information and updates on the infrastructure project are available at www.FishCreekCorridorRepair.com or by contacting Larimer County Engineer Kyle Arend at 970-498-5734.

Information on Fish Creek stream corridor master planning is available at www.FishCreekCoalition.com and www.facebook.com/FishCreekCoalition or by calling the Town's Community Development Department at 970-577-3721.

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