

North Fork Road candidate for paving, county officials say

Posted Feb. 11, 2009—Paving the North Fork Road from Canyon Creek to the Camas Creek junction is on the Flathead County Road & Bridge Department's "non-prioritized list" list of projects, the North Fork Landowners' Association Road Committee learned Jan. 21.

The meeting in Kalispell with Public Works Director David Prunty and Operations Manager Guy Foy served as "Road Maintenance 101" for committee members Margaret Heaphy, Ed Heger, Steve Weber and Steve Berg, as Prunty and Foy explained the nuances of road maintenance. Among them:

- The county attempts to blade the road immediately after significant rainfall because that's when it's most effective.
- Because of its diminishing gravel surface, the North Fork Road ranks as a fair-to-poor unpaved road.
- Magnesium chloride is the preferred, longer-lasting dust treatment for a gravel road that is in good condition; the Canyon Creek-Camas section is the only section that qualifies.
- Black oil, a county-approved emulsified asphalt product, is a more-expensive and less-durable alternative.
- Magnesium chloride costs about \$3,500 per mile to apply; black oil costs \$4,000 to \$8,000 per mile, depending on oil prices.
- There is no gravel source on the North Fork, but the county is talking with the U.S. Forest Service about acquiring gravel from its pits on the North Fork.
- The county has complied with the requirements to avoid a \$28,000 fine by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality by appointing a "dust deputy" to patrol unpaved county roads, erecting signs regulating speed under dusty conditions, committing \$10,000 to dust palliatives on Mennonite and Jensen roads, and completing a couple other projects.

Prunty and Foy said the Flathead County Board of Commissioners has requested the road department to submit a list of "shovel ready" projects (that is, roads ready to pave in 120 days or less) in anticipation of federal funding through stimulus legislation—which, if available, would most likely be distributed through the state. The Canyon Creek-Camas section qualifies.

Prunty and Foy also delivered a lesson in economics, explaining that current maintenance of the North Fork Road is not commensurate with the small tax base on the North Fork. This disparity also dampens the feasibility of North Forkers participating in the county's tentative \$100,000 dust-abatement cost-sharing program.

For a detailed outline of the meeting, [click here](#).

The committee's dedicated e-mail address is northforkroad@live.com.