

Clark Fork River Remediation and Restoration

Background:

The Clark Fork River Operable Unit (CFR OU) includes the Clark Fork River from its headwaters near Warm Springs Creek to Milltown Reservoir, just east of Missoula. The primary sources of contamination are mine tailings mixed with soil in the streambanks and historic floodplain. The tailings are laden with heavy metals (Cadmium, Copper, Zinc, and Lead) and arsenic from historic mining, milling and smelting processes in Butte and Anaconda. The contamination threatens human health and the environment.

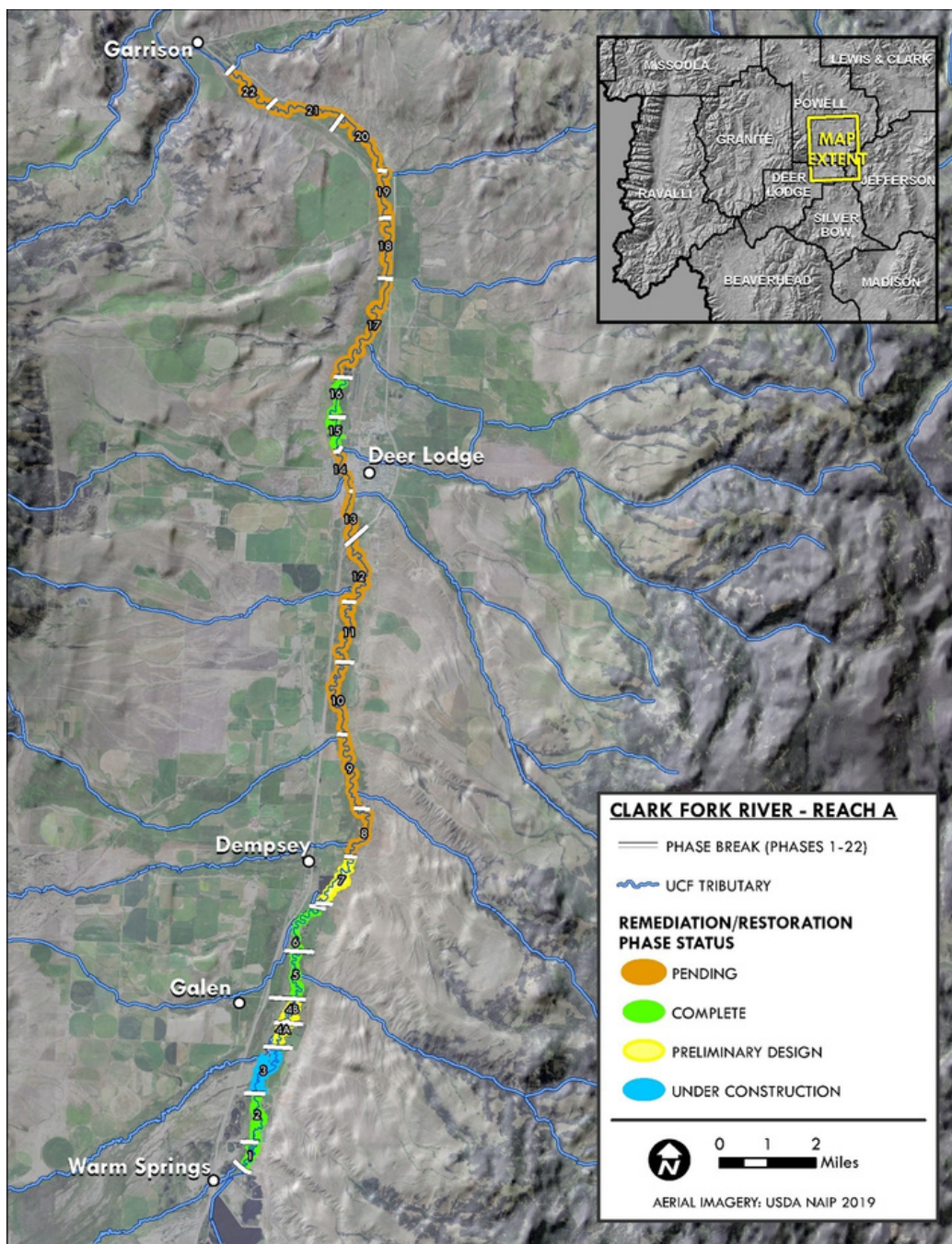
Clark Fork Remediation:

The 2004 Record of Decision (ROD) describes the cleanup approach, or Selected Remedy. The ROD authorized removal of contaminated tailings from slickens areas, removal or treatment in place of impacted areas, streambank reconstruction, land management planning, and institutional controls. Cleanup work started in 2012 along a 43-mile stretch of the river from Warm Springs in Deer Lodge County downstream to Garrison in Powell County. This is known as “Reach A” and is divided into 22 sections called Phases. Based on new information about quantity and distribution of contaminated sediments developed during design investigations in early Phases, the State prepared an Explanation of Significant Differences (ESD) in 2015. As of 2022, cleanup progress includes completion of six river Phases (1, 2, 5, 6, 15, 16) and near completion of Phase 3 as well as the Deer Lodge Residential Yards, the Trestle Area, and East Side Road Pastures.

Clark Fork Restoration:

In 2007, the Natural Resource Damage Program (NRDP) developed the Revised Restoration Plan for the Clark Fork River Aquatic and Riparian Resources (NRDP 2007) to expedite recovery time for injured aquatic, riparian, and terrestrial resources in and along the Clark Fork River. The Restoration Plan, updated again in 2020 to incorporate new information (Restoration Plan) (NRDP 2020), was to be implemented along with the Remedy to the extent practicable, in order to avoid duplication of effort and unnecessary costs, and to maximize environmental benefits to the area. Combining DEQ and NRDP budgets will allow NRDP to provide a larger financial contribution to the overall costs of construction by implementing Restoration Plan actions in tandem with the Remedy. NRDP funds would still be required to be used for Restoration responsibilities under the Restoration Plan.

Site Map:



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