

**NEWS RELEASE**  
**GOVERNOR STEVE BULLOCK**  
**STATE OF MONTANA**

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**Lt. Governor Walsh tours Jefferson Slough and Big Pipestone Creek Restoration Project**

HELENA – Lt. Governor John Walsh, Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) Director John Tubbs, Jefferson County Commissioners, Whitehall Mayor Mary Janacaro Hensleigh, and legislators toured a \$1.78 million restoration project near Whitehall today. The project is meant to reduce flood hazards, improve water quality and fight aquatic invasive species on Big Pipestone Creek and the Jefferson River Slough.

“Whitehall will immediately see job creation in the area as a result of the project—Engineers, scientists, irrigation specialists and other workers will all be needed for the two-year span of the program,” Lt. Gov. John Walsh said. “In the short term, we’ll see the economic impact of good-paying jobs. In the long-term, this work will improve water quality, irrigation efficiency, and reduce costs associated with flooding and control of invasive species.”

Over the past 100 years, alterations to the natural drainage patterns of Big Pipestone Creek and Jefferson Slough have led to a series of related problems. During high flows on the Jefferson River, Whitehall experiences flooding as water backs up from Jefferson Slough. The high flows also overwhelm irrigation works, contributing to excessive bank erosion on Big Pipestone Creek. Heavy siltation in the slough has impaired fish and wildlife habitat and created ideal conditions for Eurasian watermilfoil, an aquatic invasive weed. The Montana Department of Environmental Quality has declared Big Pipestone Creek as the state’s second-worst stream for sediment load.

“This project will benefit local irrigators, the residents of Whitehall and fish and wildlife,” said DNRC Director John Tubbs. “As a large watershed at the headwaters of the Missouri River, the impaired

conditions of Big Pipestone Creek and the Jefferson River Slough have far-reaching consequences that this project will help alleviate.”

The 2013 Montana Legislature appropriated \$1.78 million for the project to the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), which is working with Jefferson County, the Jefferson Valley Conservation District, the Montana DEQ and the Jefferson River Watershed Council. Work will get under way later this month.

More details on the Big Pipestone Creek – Jefferson Slough Restoration Project are available through Alice Stanley with the Montana DNRC at (406) 444-6687.

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