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HOLDING UP MOUNTAINS

Forest Service working to prevent landslides up Hyalite Canyon

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Workers stabilize a hillside on Hyalite Road on Thursday, Nov. 18, 2010. The \$750,000 project will hopefully prevent future landslides that block the road.

Posted: Friday, November 19, 2010 12:15 am | Updated: 8:33 am, Fri Nov 19, 2010.

By DANIEL PERSON, Chronicle Staff Writer | 2 comments

Up Hyalite Canyon on Thursday, heavy machinery perched on the mountainside pounded long rods through loose rock and soil, into the solid rock beneath it.

As the loud clang of metal meeting metal rang through the air, contractors erected a wall where the "dirt nails" had already been placed.

If the wall and nails work as intended, they will essentially fasten thousands of cubic yards of dirt to bedrock and prevent the landslides that have become a common headache in the canyon south of Bozeman.

"It wants to go, it wants to move," Gallatin National Forest engineer Jonathan Kempff said of the section of hillside 2.2 miles up Hyalite Road.

Scientists believe the area is an ancient landslide area that was "reactivated" in 2007, Kempff said Thursday.

"Now that it's moved some, it'll continue to move," he added.

In 2008, heavy rains caused a slide so bad that campers were trapped up the canyon and the U.S. Forest Service had to close the heavily used road for three weeks to clean up the debris, which included a mature Douglas fir tree.

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the "active" landslide area, meaning that if all the loose dirt and rock slid at once - shaken loose by an earthquake, say -- it would bury Hyalite Creek under 40 or 50 feet of earth.

"It's a maintenance headache, but you never know when the next shaker will be," Kempff said.

Including this project, the Forest Service has spent \$800,000 addressing the landslide-prone hillside, forest spokeswoman Marna Daley said in an e-mail.

Most of that money is for the stabilization work now being done, but Kempff said doing nothing "would create a perpetual nuisance that ... would certainly wind up closing the road on a regular basis."

The dirt nails can each support at least 120,000 pounds of pressure. Multiplied by 200, it's meant to hold a mountainside.

"It's like a weightlifter's belt," Kempff said. "This holds it so it can't start moving."

Daniel Person can be reached at dperson@dailychronicle.com or 582-2665.

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2 comments:

spontaneouscreation posted at 1:02 pm on Fri, Nov 19, 2010.



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cool.

i think at the end of the article, the author is intending to say that the nails combined can support 24 mil pounds, or 12,000 tons. weight, not pressure. (although weight exerts pressure on an area)

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TheBigJ posted at 10:00 am on Fri, Nov 19, 2010.



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