

EDITORIAL: Winning the uphill battle to fix slope

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Residents affected by the unstable hillside on the west end of the Village Greens golf community no doubt are relieved to know Flathead County is finally moving forward with a stabilization project that should keep the bluff from sliding again.

The county commissioners this week awarded a contract for up to \$945,000 to Schellinger Construction and Tetra Tech, a construction and design/engineering team that will handle the work. Property owners off Whitefish Stage Road, whose homes sit on that bluff, are the most vulnerable for damage from future slides. They're the ones who had to legally push the county to be the sponsoring government agency for a federal grant that will pay for drainage improvements, a gravel buttress, backfill slope support and revegetation.

The homeowners also stepped up by putting well over \$100,000 of their own money into the project, as required by the grant's match requirement, and they developed a plan to get fill dirt from the Glacier Rail Park that can be used as a substantial in-kind donation from the property owners. It has taken six years for them to get to this point. One has to admire that kind of perseverance.

Firefighters did great job

Full containment was reached this week on the 60-acre Bierney Creek Fire west of Lakeside.

While that's good news, the best news for people in and around Lakeside was that no structures burned in the fire that started Aug. 22.

In fact, it was furious firefighting efforts that first evening that probably saved homes endangered by the fire.

A concentrated attack backed by helicopters and planes may have spelled the difference between burned forest and torched homes.

Firefighters, particularly our local volunteers, deserve a great deal of credit for their success in keeping the Bierney Creek Fire to a manageable and less destructive size.