

Project Title: **O'DELL CREEK PHASE 20 (FINAL PHASE)**
STREAM AND WETLAND RESTORATION PROJECT – IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

Date: **November 25, 2025**

Applicability to Project 2188 License Article(s)

O'Dell Creek Phase 20 Project will offset impacts to river resources associated with Project 2188 (Madison-Missouri River). The project meets the purpose and intent of License Article 423, which requires development of a vegetation and wildlife monitoring and enhancement plan intended to enhance native plants and wildlife populations on Project 2188 wildlife habitats adjacent to the Madison River. Specifically, NorthWestern Energy is successfully enhancing Project 2188 wildlife habitats through funding aimed to protect, restore, and enhance riparian, wetland, and upland habitats on private lands. The O'Dell Creek project and the benefits that have resulted from 20 years of restoration work in the O'Dell Creek headwaters, are specifically referenced in Article 423 (see Updated Five Year 2013-2017 Project 2188 Wildlife Plan). NorthWestern Energy continues to monitor prior phases of work to assess the effectiveness of previously implemented projects, including the benefits to stream temperature, streamflow quantity, avian species richness and numbers, sensitive plants, and acres of restored/enhanced wetlands.

Justification for Priority 2 Classification

The O'Dell Creek Phase 20 Stream and Wetland Restoration Project classifies as a Priority 2 2188 license project. The project is located on O'Dell Creek, a major cold-water spring creek tributary to the Madison River, within 0.8 miles of the Madison River, and will address limiting factors related to degraded wildlife, wetland and aquatic resources.

Project Sponsor(s): NorthWestern Energy, Inc.
Granger Ranches, L.P.
Madison River Foundation
SWCA Environmental Consultants, Inc.

Location of Proposed Project

The project is in Madison County approximately three miles south of the town of Ennis, Montana. The project is located on State of Montana School Trust Land, leased by Granger Ranches, LLC for livestock pasture. The legal description of the project area is Sections 16 and 17, Township 6 South, Range 1 West. Please refer to Figure 1.

Geocodes: 25-0423-16-1-01-01-0000

Latitude: 45.316; **Longitude:** -111.741

Total Project Cost: \$240,900

WildTAC Funds (Cost-Share) Requested for Project: \$225,900

I. INTRODUCTION

O'Dell Spring Creek and floodplain wetlands are important ecological resources to the Madison River. Over the past 20 years, 19 major phases of restoration work have culminated in the restoration of 19 miles of spring creek and approximately 900 acres wetlands. Restoration suitability, willing landowners, and private-public partnerships are the reasons for the success of this large-scale, comprehensive restoration project. In 2018, NorthWestern Energy, Granger Ranches, Longhorn Ranch, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service received the ***Society for Ecological Restoration Northwest Restoration Project of the Year Award***. The award recognizes the important wildlife habitat gains resulting from permanently protecting and restoring wetland habitats.

Accomplishments include:

- Approximately 900 acres of restored wetlands, with over 265 wetland plant taxa detected on restored floodplain surfaces, representing 20% of Montana's wetland flora including 5 rare species. A range of wetland types and wetland plant communities including fens, saline meadows, open water and emergent complex.
- 115 bird species are now documented in the project area compared to 29 species prior to restoration, with 18 Montana Species of Concern.
- The project now supports over 50 over-wintering trumpeter swans following the successful release of juvenile birds in 2012.
- 8 documented species of waterfowl broods compared to 4 species prior to restoration.
- Increasing distribution and abundance of songbirds and wetland-dependent species.
- 20 miles of stream channel restoration, with an estimated ten-fold increase in the availability of adult holding and juvenile rearing habitat compared to pre-restoration conditions.
- Reduction in stream water temperatures due to improvement to channel morphology and hyporheic exchange between surface water and groundwater.

In 2018, the NorthWestern WildTAC funded a master plan to identify and prioritize restoration opportunities on O'Dell Creek from Fever Point (end of Phase 16 project) to Highway 287 near Ennis, Montana. **The Master Plan Identified Phase 20 as the last remaining phase of work on O'Dell Creek.** Reach conditions are characterized by high channel entrenchment, eroding streambanks, and high width-to-depth ratio channel geometry. The purpose of this project is to improve aquatic habitat conditions of O'Dell Creek and associated riparian wetland functions (Figure 1). This will be accomplished by restoring appropriate channel and floodplain dimensions by lowering channel width-to-depth ratios, lower high terraces to bankfull elevation to encourage establishment of emergent wetland vegetation, and reshaping portions of the reach with riffle, pool, run and glide habitat features. New floodplain surfaces supporting emergent and scrub-shrub wetland communities will be created in over-widened channel areas. Specifically, the goals of this project include: 1) improving aquatic, riparian, and terrestrial habitat diversity for fish and wildlife; 2) establishing riffle and pool sequences and reducing channel width-to-depth ratios; 3) creating a complex matrix of variable depth wetlands in over-widened channel sections; and 4) converting areas within the existing upland herbaceous plant communities to wetlands by creating new, lower floodplain surfaces adjacent to O'Dell Creek.

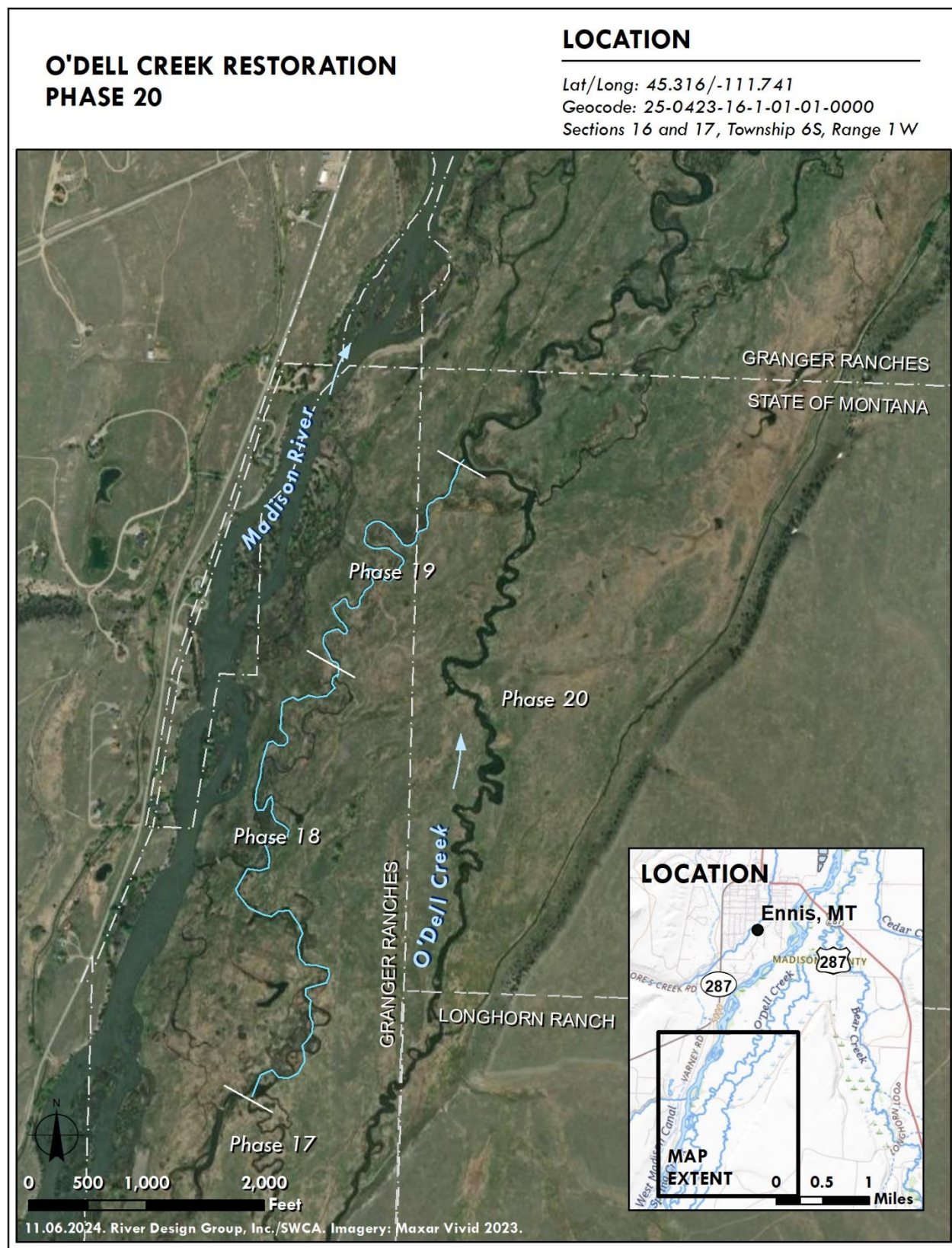




Figure 2. Typical channel and floodplain conditions in the Phase 20 project area.

II. Objectives

The following objectives have been developed for the Phase 20 project area in conjunction with the project partners and landowners:

1. Produce clean water consistent with supporting aquatic life and beneficial uses in the O'Dell Creek watershed and downstream receiving waterbody, the Madison River;
2. Create complex aquatic habitat components such as depth, velocity, substrate, cover, and pools that support populations of wild trout and other aquatic organisms;
3. Construct a stream channel that is connected to and interacts with the floodplain in terms of hyporheic flow and nutrient exchange; and
4. Create a more complex matrix of wetlands in over-widened channel sections by creating backwater areas, open water wetlands, and new floodplain surfaces that support emergent and scrub-shrub wetland communities.

III. Methods

This cost-share proposal is for implementation of the Phase 20 design, which is currently in draft form pending additional data collection. NorthWestern Energy will contract directly with TNT Excavating, Inc. TNT is on NorthWestern Energy's Qualified Vendor's List for stream and wetland

restoration, and over the past 20 years, has completed 18 of 19 phases of restoration in the O'Dell Creek headwaters. Implementation will consist of the following specialized equipment:

- Tracked Excavator with Machine Grade GPS (2)
- All Surface Vehicle
- 14 Ton Articulated Off Road Truck with Floatation Tires
- Low Ground Pressure Mats
- GPS Base Station and RTK Rover

SWCA will provide construction staking and management services throughout the duration of the project, on a part time basis.

IV. Schedule

The following project schedule has been developed for Spring 2026 implementation (Table 1). Project engineering and regulatory permitting will be completed in the Winter of 2026 under an existing 2025 contract with NorthWestern Energy. Design work is being closely coordinated with NorthWestern Energy, Granger Ranches, and the State of Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Trust Lands Management Division.

Table 1. Implementation Schedule for Phase 20.

Task	April	May	June
Task 1. Mobilization			
Task 2. Implementation			
Task 3. Demobilization			

V. Personnel

Similar to past phases of restoration on O'Dell Creek, the project will be implemented under the guidance of a diverse group of stakeholders including NorthWestern Energy, Madison River Foundation, and Granger Ranches, LP. As a team, we have established a track record of successful collaboration on 19 projects on O'Dell Creek. Our continued collaboration and history working on this project underscores the importance we place on offering a team that will continue to be compatible with the community and stakeholders.

SWCA (formerly RDG) is an approved consultant on NorthWestern Energy's Qualified Vendor's List for stream and wetland restoration services. RDG prepared and implemented all previous phases of restoration on O'Dell Creek apart from Phases 1 and 2. John Muhlfeld will serve as the project oversight manager and technical lead on behalf of the design team. Nate Wyatt, P.E., with RDG, will serve as the project engineer. Selita Ammond, PWS, will facilitate regulatory permitting under SWCA's 2025 contract with NorthWestern Energy.

VI. Budget

Table 2 includes a not-to-exceed cost estimate to implement the Phase 20 design. The total cost to perform the SOW is \$240,900. Granger Ranches and Madison River Foundation have committed a \$15,000 share match as illustrated in Table 2 for a total WildTAC request of \$225,900.

Table 2. O'Dell Creek Phase 20 Cost Estimate.	
Task	Cost
1. Project Management	\$ 1,500.00
Coordination with NWE, Owners, Stakeholders	\$ 3,000.00
2. Construction Management	\$ 24,450.00
Construction Management (SWCA)	\$ 24,450
3. Construction	\$ 212,000
Excavator Class 320 with GPS	\$ 56,000
Excavator Class 320 with GPS	\$ 56,000
14 CY Articulated Off Road Truck with Floatation Tires (2)	\$ 63,500
All Surface Vehicle	\$ 7,500
Mobilization and Demobilization	\$ 11,000
Per Diem and Lodging for Contractor (3 Person Crew)	\$ 10,500
GPS Base Station and RTK Rover	\$ 7,500
4. Direct Costs	\$ 2,950
Mileage	\$ 1,550
Per Diem	\$ 600
Lodging	\$ 800
Total Project Cost	\$ 240,900
*Cash Match (Granger Ranches and Madison River Foundation)	\$ 15,000
Total WildTAC Funds Requested	\$ 225,900
* Cultural Resources Investigation for Phase 20 will be completed by NorthWestern Energy, Inc .	

VII. Deliverables

Project deliverables will include the following:

- Approximately 4,250 feet of restored channel and habitat.
- Approximately 6 acres of enhanced riverine and emergent wetland habitats.

VIII. Cultural Resources

NorthWestern Energy will coordinate the necessary cultural resources investigations.

IX. Water Rights

Appropriate analysis will be performed to demonstrate that the project complies with the intent of Montana DNRC's "*Guidance for Landowners and Practitioners Engaged in Stream and Wetland Restoration Activities*", issued by the Water Resources Division on March 9, 2016. DNRC guidelines state that "any wetland project (restoration) whose final design approximates the natural characteristics of adjacent natural wetlands or approximates something smaller in magnitude does

not require a water right". The guidelines also state that restored wetlands should have characteristics similar to other natural wetlands in the area and should function entirely in the absence of artificial controls and diversions of water that is intentionally appropriate water for wetland use.