**Project Title:** **O'Dell Creek Revegetation Phase 6**

**Date:** November 16, 2026

**Applicability to Project 2188 License Article(s)**

The O'Dell Creek Revegetation Phase 6 Project will provide a final on-the-ground replanting and cleanup of the past 5 years of revegetation work completed within the O'Dell Creek drainage on stream restoration project floodplains. The stream restoration and revegetation projects 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. Past Phases 1 – 5 of the O'Dell Creek Revegetation Projects have restored woody riparian vegetation to the O'Dell Creek Restoration Project areas on both the Granger Ranches and Longhorn Ranch land holdings. A comprehensive O'Dell Creek Revegetation Monitoring Project was completed in 2025, and this Revegetation Phase 6 project is designed to implement recommendations of the 2025 monitoring report.

**Priority Classification**

The O'Dell Creek Revegetation Phase 6 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 0.4 miles of the Madison River, and will address limiting factors related to degraded wildlife habitat, wetlands, and aquatic resources.

**Project Sponsor(s):** River Design Group, Inc., now part of SWCA Environmental Consultants
Longhorn Ranch
Granger Ranches, L.P.

**Location of Proposed Project**

The proposed Revegetation Phase 6 Project is in Madison County approximately five miles south of the town of Ennis, Montana, on the Longhorn Ranch and Granger Ranches, both of which are working cattle ranches. It is located in Sections 20, 21, 28, 29, and 33 of Township 6 South, Range 1 West, and Sections 4 and 9 of Township 7 South, Range 1 West.

**Geocodes:** 25-0423-33-1-01-01-0000; 25-0423-28-1-01-01-0000; 25-0423-29-1-01-01-0000; 25-0334-04-1-01-01-0000.

**Latitude (Center of Project Area):** 45.267 **Longitude (Center of Project Area):** -111.731

**Total Project Cost:** $32,728

**WildTAC Funds Requested for Project: $**32,728

## I. Introduction

O'Dell Creek and its spring creek tributaries are important ecological connections to the Madison River, providing a source of cool fresh water to the river as well as a variety of aquatic, riparian and terrestrial habitats that are utilized by a host of plant and animal species. Woody riparian vegetation provides stream shading which reduces stream temperatures and improves cover for aquatic species. Over time, woody vegetation on streambanks also provides a source of large woody debris to the stream, which improves fish habitat conditions by promoting pool formation and aquatic habitat heterogeneity. In addition, woody riparian vegetation serves as a seed source for other floodplain areas and provides habitat for a wide range of avian species and small and large mammals. As seen in vegetation reference reaches downstream of the project area, woody vegetation was likely a large component of the O'Dell Creek riparian system prior to anthropogenic modifications including land clearing for grazing and agriculture.

Over the past 20 years, 19 major phases of stream and wetland 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 program. Since 2019, separate woody plant revegetation efforts along the stream and wetland restoration project areas have been implemented, which have resulted in the planting of 7,600 willow cuttings, 868 nursery-grown woody shrubs and trees, and 50 nursery-grown large cottonwood trees throughout the stream and wetland restoration project areas.

Implementation of the woody species revegetation projects has resulted in slow but steady growth of willow shrubs and cottonwood trees where microsite selection has been favorable, and where browse control fencing has succeeded. Recommendations for continued success of willows and other riparian shrubs planted in large fenced planting units on outer meander banks include removal of polypropylene deer defense (plastic) fence and replacement with welded wire fence where growth is adequate, on approximately 50% of planting locations across both Granger Ranches and Longhorn Ranches.

## II. Objectives

The objective of the O'Dell Creek Revegetation Phase 6 Project is to perform a project cleanup and replanting effort and implement the recommendations of the revegetation monitoring completed in 2025. This Revegetation Phase 6 Project will clean up revegetation units including removal of old failed plastic fencing from planting units where microsites are not conducive to shrub establishment or growth, removal of dead cottonwood saplings and cages, installation of welded wire fencing in place of plastic fencing on functioning planting units, and re-planting yellow willow shrubs from nursery grown stock. Specific objectives of the project are below.

1. Improve revegetation efforts by focusing on plantings and species that have succeeded.
2. Leave revegetation projects in the best available condition to allow minimal maintenance, if any, over the next five years.
3. Continue to provide woody riparian vegetation on O'Dell Creek streambanks, stream shading, and riparian habitat for wildlife and avian species.

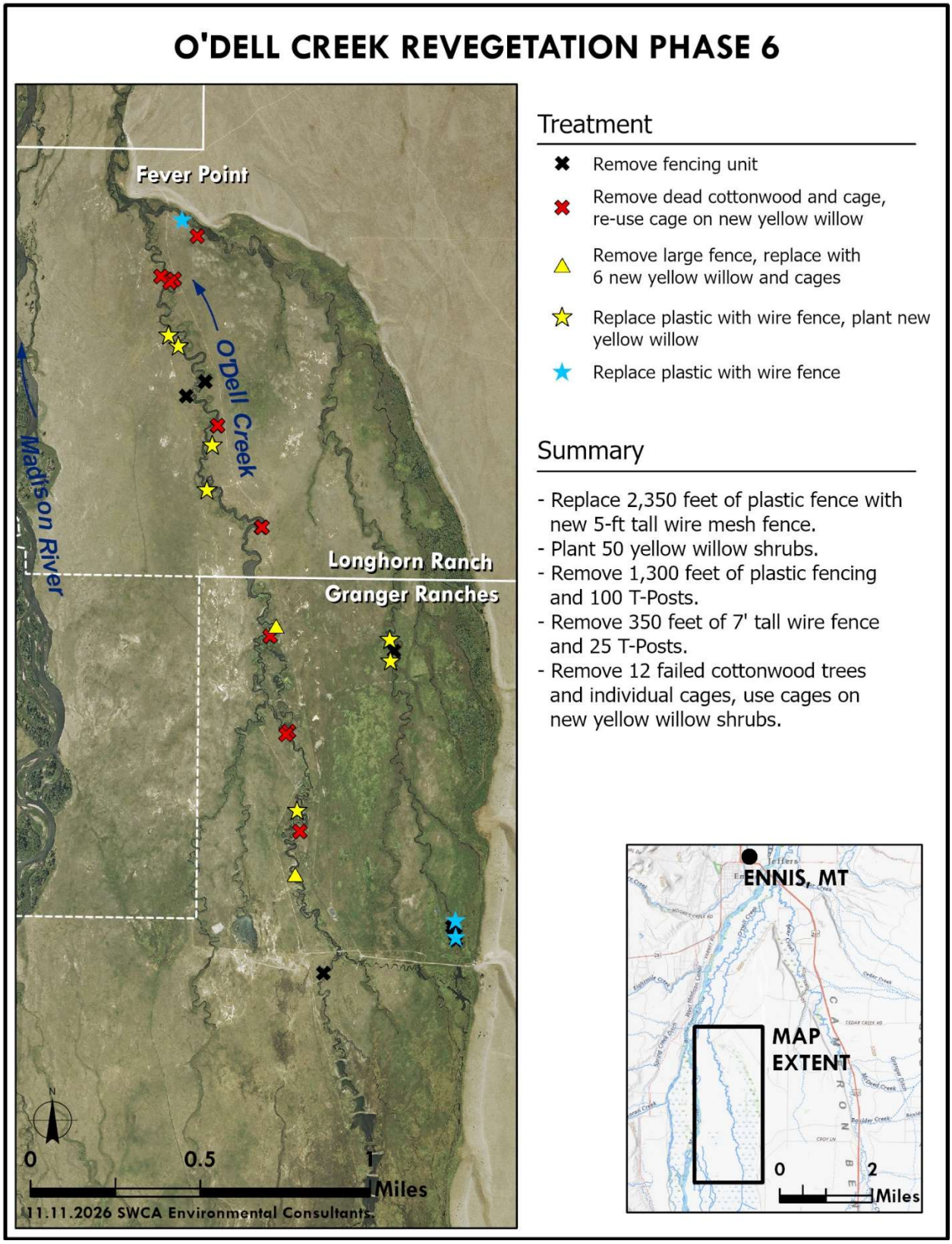



**Figure 1.** O'Dell Creek Revegetation Phase 6 Project Proposal.

## III. Methods

Implementation of the Revegetation Phase 6 project will occur in Spring or Fall 2026, which will depend on landowner preference. 50 yellow willow shrubs will be planted in select locations where microsites have been conducive to growth but where browse exclosure fencing has failed. Within these locations, plastic deer defense fencing will be replaced with welded wire mesh fencing, allowing for minimal maintenance over the next 5 years. Plastic fence will also be replaced with wire fence on five browse protection units that were installed on naturally occurring willow communities. On planting unit locations where monitoring has showed that the microsite and habitat is not conducive to woody species growth, fencing and T-posts will be completely removed. In addition, cottonwood saplings that have not persisted on floodplain locations will be removed, and their individual cages will be removed and reused on new yellow plantings.

SWCA will provide oversight of the revegetation project, which will be installed by Forestoration, Inc., a qualified revegetation contractor and native species nursery. Forestoration has implemented Revegetation Phases 2 – 5 in 2021 – 2025 and are familiar with all aspects of the project.

## IV. Schedule

SWCA will perform implementation oversight either in early May 2027, or early October 2027, which will depend on landowner preference. Both time frames provide an acceptable planting period, as willow cuttings are not proposed which would necessitate a fall planting.

## V. Personnel

SWCA, formerly River Design Group, will be responsible for oversight of the project. SWCA/RDG is an approved consultant on NorthWestern Energy's Qualified Vendor's List for stream and wetland restoration services. SWCA/RDG has prepared and implemented all previous phases of stream and wetland restoration on O'Dell Creek except for Stream Restoration Phases 1 and 2, and has designed and implemented Revegetation Phases 1-5. Selita Ammondt, PWS, will serve as the project manager and will oversee project implementation.

## VI. Budget

The table below includes a not-to-exceed cost estimate to perform the Scope of Work. The total cost to perform the work, including SWCA oversight and the subcontractor, is $32,728.

| O'Dell Creek Revegetation Phase 6 Cost Estimate | |
|---|---|
| **Task 1 - Project Management** | |
| Coordination with Landowners | 699 |
| **Total** | **$ 699** |
| **Task 2 - Project Implementation** | |
| SWCA Implementation Oversight | 6,058 |
| **Subcontractor** | |
| Labor | 10,086 |
| Yellow Willow Shrubs | 1,438 |
| Fencing Materials | 5,031 |
| Equipment | 949 |
| Hauling/Mobilization/Travel Costs | 7,444 |
| **Total** | **$ 31,005** |
| **Task 3 - Direct Costs** | |
| Mileage | 520 |
| Lodging | 300 |
| Per Diem | 204 |
| **Total** | **$ 1,024** |
| **Total Cost** | **$ 32,728** |

## VII. Deliverables

The project deliverable will be on-the-ground revegetation projects cleanup and shrub planting, and a project completion report with photographs of treatments as well as a detailed map of project elements.

## VIII. Cultural Resources

Cultural resources will not be impacted as the project will result in minimal ground disturbance.

## IX. Water Rights

Streams or wetlands will not be impacted with this project, and Montana water rights laws, policies, and guidelines do not apply.