

## **O'Dell Creek Headwaters/Wetlands Restoration and Protection Project – Madison Valley, Montana**

Since 2005, conservation partners in the Madison Valley have worked together to restore and protect in perpetuity, one of the largest remaining wetland complexes in Montana, the O'Dell Creek Headwaters Wetlands. PPL Montana, Montana Land Reliance, USDA Farm Service Agency, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, The Trust for Public Land, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Madison River Foundation, Montana Audubon, Ducks Unlimited, and several large ranches in the area have contributed generously of their time, as well as financial and personnel resources to make this nationally recognized project a reality.

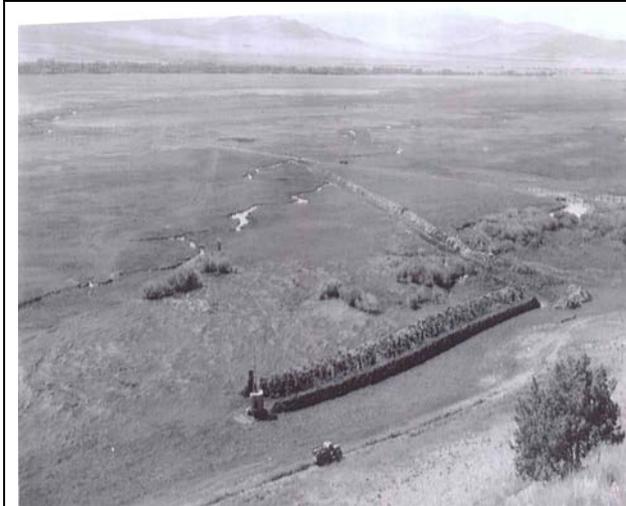
Among its many goals, the O'Dell Creek project has focused on restoration of fully functional wetland habitats in places where channelization and diversion have reduced wetland extent, diversity, and function. Much of the area lies within the Ennis Bird Habitat Conservation Areas (BHCA) as identified by the Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV) in its *Coordinated Implementation Plan for Bird Conservation in Western Montana*.

Since 2005, eight distinct phases of construction have been completed in the O'Dell Creek Headwaters, resulting in nearly 9 miles of restored spring creek channel, 406 acres of restored wetlands, and 256 additional acres of wetlands with improved function. From 2008-2012, nearly three miles of drainage ditches dug in the early 1950s have been plugged or completely filled.

Because of the extensive wetlands restoration work over the past eight years, the O'Dell Creek partners have initiated a project to restore breeding trumpeter swans to this portion of their historic Montana breeding range. The release of five trumpeters in August 2012 at the O'Dell Creek Headwaters Wetlands was a milestone in conservation due to the iconic nature of this species and to mark the successful restoration of much of this major wetland complex.

Restoration of the 12-mile long O'Dell Creek system involves restoring the natural dimensions, form and function of the stream channel to provide multiple benefits to fish and wildlife populations dependent upon healthy streams, clean water, extensive riparian areas, and a complex of diverse wetland types.

The remarkable success of this on-going effort has drawn local, state, and national media attention and resulted in numerous accolades and awards for the Granger Ranches where most of the restoration has taken place to date. Most notable of these recognitions to date are the 2005 Montana Wetland Stewardship Award to the Laszlo Family which owns the Granger Ranches and also the 2010 National Wetland Award, which recognized the Laszlo Family's "exceptional and innovative contributions to wetlands conservation". Neighboring and other ranches downstream from the Granger Ranch have initiated significant conservation easements and restoration projects on their lands. As the work in the O'Dell Creek area continues to expand to these other ranches in the middle Madison Valley, the ecological benefits to the Madison will continue to accrue for years to come, enhancing not only the environment but improving the wild trout fisheries which are a vital part of the local economy.



August 2, 1951 – O'Dell Cr. drainage in progress



May 3, 2011 – Similar view after 6 phases of restoration