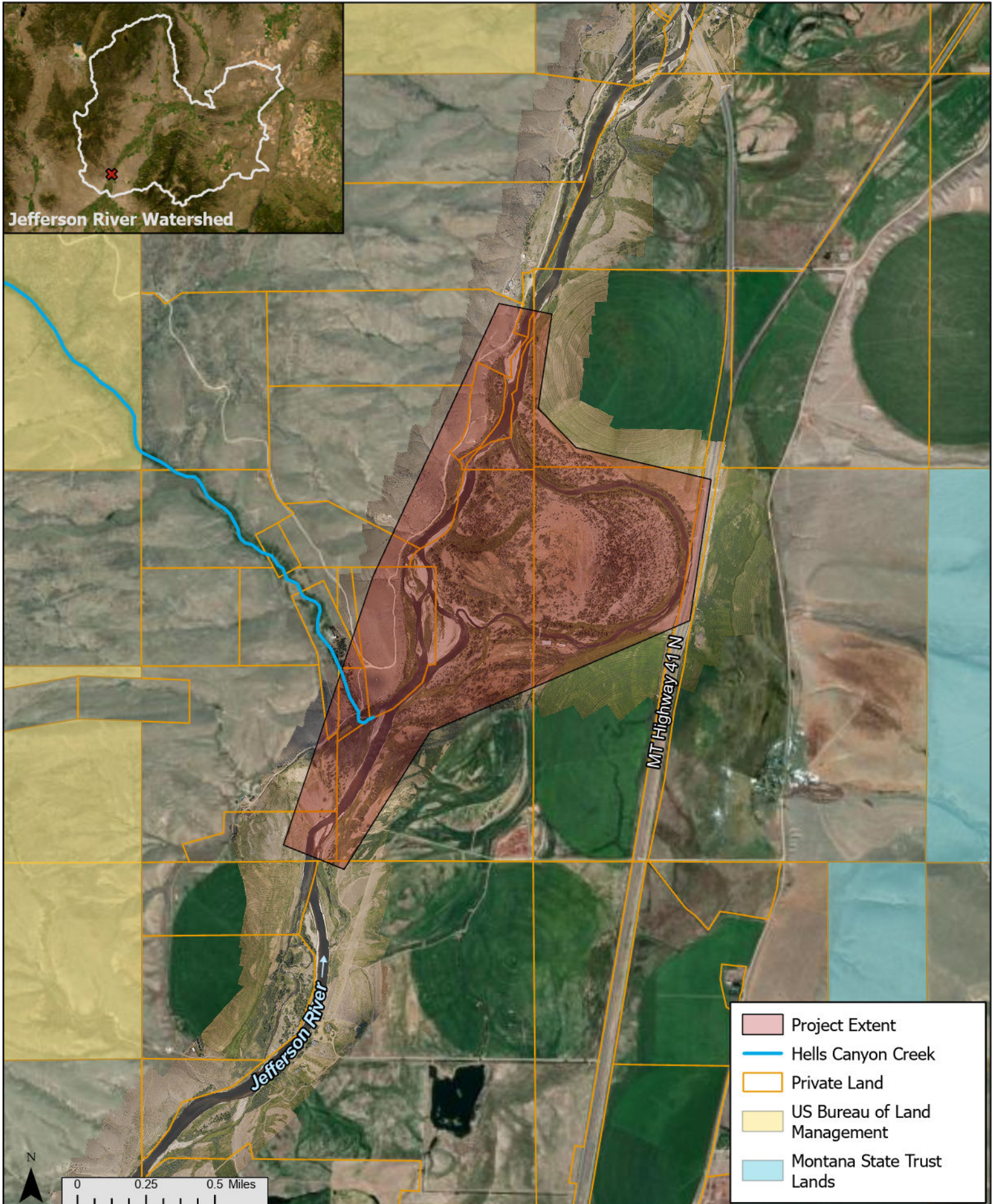
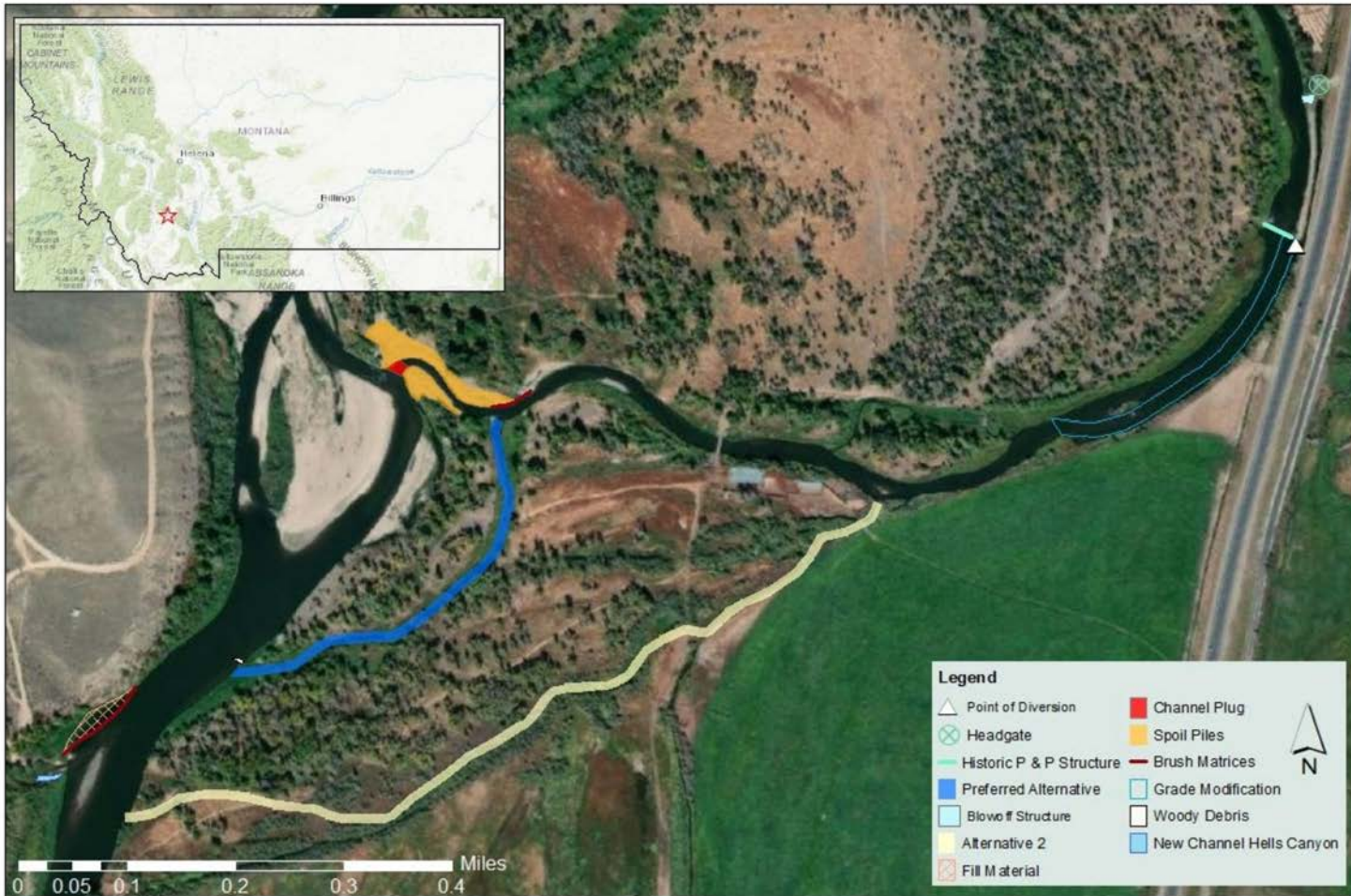


Upper Jefferson River Channel Restoration Project

Location Map



Upper Jefferson Channel Restoration Project



Upper Jefferson River Channel Restoration Project Photos



Figure 1: Aerial View of Side Channels



*Figure 2: Bank Stabilization Site Upstream of USGS gage
45.61533 N, 112.32785 W*



Figure 3: Current Channel Entrance
45.62142 N, 112.32253 W



Figure 4: Existing Jersey Barrier on Side Channel
45.62274 N, 112.31086 W

May 13, 2026

FWP Future Fisheries Improvement Program Grant Review Committee
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620

Re: Letter of Support for the Upper Jefferson River Channel Restoration Project

Grant Review Committee,

This letter is submitted on behalf of the Gideon Root Ditch in strong support of the Upper Jefferson River Channel Restoration Project. The Jefferson River holds significant agricultural, ecological and cultural importance to this valley and efforts to restore and maintain a healthy functioning channel in this reach is a valuable investment. A stable channel with intact floodplain connectivity supports riparian vegetation and improves the instream habitat that fisheries depend on. Reduced bank erosion and sediment loading benefit water quality throughout the reach. The current diversion structure includes cement barriers that direct water to the headgate but block fish passage, particularly during the low water periods that the Jefferson regularly experiences. Replacing this with fish friendly infrastructure improves passage through the channel and is especially important given the proximity to Hells Canyon Creek, one of the Upper Jefferson's most significant coldwater tributaries and a key rainbow trout spawning stream. The benefits of this work will extend well beyond the project footprint.

This project supports both the river and the irrigators who depend on it. The Gideon Root Ditch has senior water rights dating to April 1871, and a stable channel means less maintenance on diversion infrastructure and more predictable water delivery season to season. As a participant in the Jefferson River Drought Management Plan, I have worked alongside agencies and conservation partners to navigate the challenges that the river faces under low flow conditions. The Drought Management Plan highlights how water users and conservation partners can work toward the same goal effectively. This project does that, and the Gideon Root Ditch is pleased to offer its support.

Sincerely,

Rick R. Sandru

Rick Sandru, Landowner
Sandru Ranch
Gideon Root Ditch



May 6th, 2026

Jefferson River Watershed Council
P.O. Box 550
Whitehall, MT 59759

Future Fisheries Improvement Program
FWP Fisheries Division
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Future Fisheries Improvement Program Review Panel,

The Jefferson River Watershed Council is pleased to provide this letter of support for the Upper Jefferson Channel Restoration Project submitted by the Ruby Valley Conservation District. The Jefferson River Watershed Council strongly endorses this project and encourages the Future Fisheries Improvement Program to fund its implementation.

The Jefferson River Watershed Council works collaboratively with landowners, water users, conservation organizations and agency partners to improve water quality, instream flows and aquatic habitat throughout the Jefferson River Watershed. The Upper Jefferson Channel Restoration Project directly advances these goals by addressing several of the most significant habitat and water management challenges in this reach of river, including impaired fish passage, chronic channel disturbance associated with irrigation infrastructure maintenance and reduced connectivity to Hells Canyon creek, one of the most important spawning tributaries in this section of the watershed.

The project site is located within the reach addressed by the Jefferson River Drought Management Plan, managed by the Jefferson River Watershed Council, and the landowner is an active participant in that plan. The irrigation infrastructure improvements proposed as part of this project will allow for better control of diverted water, directly supporting the water conservation objectives of the Drought Management Plan and contributing to improved instream flows.

The Upper Jefferson Channel Restoration Project has strong community and partner support and is shovel ready with completed engineering designs and secured funding from multiple sources. Funding from the Future Fisheries Improvement Program will bring this project closer to full implementation.

Sincerely,

Miranda Protzen
JRWC Watershed Coordinator



May 11, 2026

Montana Trout Unlimited
PO Box 7186
Missoula, MT. 59807

Re: Ruby Valley Conservation District - Upper Jefferson Channel Restoration Project

Dear FWP Future Fisheries Improvement Program Citizens Review Committee:

Montana Trout Unlimited (MTU), on behalf of more than 5,000 statewide members and friends, including local membership in two chapters of Trout Unlimited, supports the Ruby Valley Conservation District's (RVCD) Future Fisheries Improvement Program (FFIP) grant application, *Upper Jefferson Channel Restoration Project*. We ask that the FFIP panel fully fund the RVCD's request to help complete this project in 2027, which squarely fits MTU's mission to conserve, protect, and restore Montana's world-class fisheries and their watersheds.

We have been a steadfast partner in this project since the landowner, Rick Sandru, toured me around his ranch in 2019 to discuss challenges and opportunities to improve water resources on his property. He is a conservation-minded landowner who strives for win-win solutions. He is an integral participant in the Jefferson River Drought Management Plan (which MTU manages for the Jefferson River Watershed Council), serves as president of the Ruby Valley Stock Association, Ruby Valley Conservation District (RVCD) supervisor, founding member of the Ruby Valley Strategic Alliance, and participates in numerous other industry-affiliated organizations. His ultimate goal is to preserve what makes Southwest Montana unique and ensure that his kids and grandkids can carry on the family's ranching legacy.

We believe this project is in the best interest of protecting and enhancing natural resource values and public safety while maintaining critical irrigation infrastructure on the Sandru Ranch. The head of the side channel that leads to the Gideon-Root irrigation ditch is on an outside bend of the Jefferson River. The result is excessive and dangerous cobble and debris removal using an excavator during and after seasonal runoff. This has led to excessive sedimentation and habitat loss in the main and side channels. It has also become a hazard to floaters. Reactivating the historic, upstream channel at the preferred alternative site will accomplish several project objectives: reconnecting high-quality riparian and wetland habitat that has been disconnected by a berm; improving floodplain connection and function;

restoring public safety; and ensuring the Sandru's can safely access irrigation water.

There are numerous fisheries improvements in the design that we are keen to see accomplished. Reactivating the historic channel will add channel length and complexity for trout, whitefish, and other aquatic organisms. Downstream, near the Point of Diversion for the Gideon-Root ditch, a design that allows for irrigation withdrawal without impeding fish passage is of particular importance. Currently, cement barriers force water towards the headgate and block fish passage, especially during low-water periods that the Jefferson experiences almost annually. On river left, improving connectivity and fish passage at the mouth of Hells Canyon Creek, arguably the Jefferson River's most important Rainbow trout spawning tributary in the upper river, is a key component of this project. Hells Canyon is only one of four coldwater tributaries that connect to the Jefferson River during critical low water periods, running up to 10°F colder than the mainstem.

MTU has been and continues to be an integral project partner, and we are grateful for the RVCD's role as the project lead. MTU committed \$5,000 to, and assisted in, drafting RVCD's successful ARPA Irrigation Infrastructure grant to fully fund planning and design. MTU assisted RVCD with their successful \$1,115,080 US Bureau of Reclamation proposal, of which FFIP funding will be an integral match. We provided in-kind services to the project by drafting a Request for Qualifications to hire a project engineer. We will continue to look for opportunities to support this project in any aspect we can, financially or otherwise.

Like many Montanans, our members prize the opportunity to pursue wild fish in high-quality habitat. That is why MTU advocates for, plans, and implements stream restoration with partners to improve aquatic ecosystems. Thank you for considering our input on this project. Feel free to contact us with any questions or comments regarding our support.

Sincerely,



Chris Edgington
Jefferson Watershed Project Manager
Montana Trout Unlimited
chris@montanatu.org



Let's build a better environment together

TECHNICAL MEMO

DATE: December 30, 2024

TO: Ruby Valey Conservation District

FROM: Mike Sanctuary

RE: Upper Jefferson River Restoration Project 100% Designs

Following completion and review of the 90% designs of the Upper Jefferson River Restoration Project by the Ruby Valley Conservation District, Trout Unlimited, and the Sandru Ranch, the following is a list of updates included in the 100% design plans:

- Aerial photos on Overall Site Plan (Sheet 3) have been corrected to prevent overlapping photos.
- Gravel borrow area shown on Sheet 3 relocated further southwest
- Sheets 4 and 5 updated to indicate location of "muck" placement following new side channel excavation.
- Callout on Sheet 7 revised to indicate existing headgate and culverts to be removed and replaced with new culverts.
- Two 40' x 30" CMP culverts added to material quantities list on Sheet 28 (to replace squashed culverts at existing ditch crossing)
- Gideon Root Ditch blowoff headgate and associated quantities shown on 90% plans removed
- Landowner boundaries added to Sheet 25 to show which landowners will require permission to construct new Hells Canyon Creek confluence. Boundaries shown are based on Montana Cadastral data source and have not been verified by a professional land surveyor. Land surveyor who performed boundary survey in 2005 was contacted but does not have a digital version of the surveyed parcel boundaries.
- Equipment access and proposed staging areas added to Overall Site Plan Sheet 3.
- Fencing plan added to Sheet 27 and includes locations of fence to be replaced, fence to be maintained and new fence to be installed. Quantities for each fencing type added to Sheet 28.
- All quantities updated on Sheet 28
- Construction specifications and contractor requirements added to Sheet 2.
- Cost estimates updated (see tables below for each construction item)

Upper Jefferson River Restoration Project Preliminary Construction Cost Estimate					
Task No.		QTY	Unit	Unit/ Price	Cost
1	Bank Stabilization - Site 1 - Upstream				
1.1	Bank Grading	1110	LF	\$ 3.00	\$ 3,330
1.2	Riprap Installation (Class II)	2200	CY	\$ 70.00	\$ 154,000
1.3	Native Bed Material Installation (Excavate and install)	917	CY	\$ 5.00	\$ 4,585
1.4	Coffer Dam Construction	1110	LF	\$ 16.00	\$ 17,760
1.5	Haul and Place Pit Run	137	CY	\$ 12.00	\$ 1,644
1.6	LWD (Log Tie In)	1	EA	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000
1.7	Willow Cutting Installation	9900	EA	\$ 2.00	\$ 19,800
1.8	Willow Transplants	112	EA	\$ 36.00	\$ 4,032
1.8	Topsoil Placement	183	CY	\$ 2.00	\$ 366
1.9	Construct Temporary Staging Area	1	EA	\$ 1,100.00	\$ 1,100
1.10	Non Woven Fabric	2506	SY	\$ 3.00	\$ 7,518
1.11	Revegetation	1	LS	\$ 3,300.00	\$ 3,300
1.12	Mitigation Credits	1110	LF	\$ 50.00	\$ 55,500
				Subtotal Construction	\$ 275,935
				Mobilization (10% of Construction)	\$ 27,594
				Construction Oversight (10% of Construction)	\$ 27,594
				Total Construction	\$ 331,122
				Contingency (20%)	\$ 66,200
				Total	\$ 397,322
2	Bank Stabilization - Site 2 - Downstream				
2.1	Gravel Bar Relocation	5516	CY	\$ 7.00	\$ 38,612
2.2	Bank Armoring (Cobble)	497	CY	\$ 8.00	\$ 3,976
2.3	Wood & Brush Treatment	400	LF	\$ 43.00	\$ 17,200
				Subtotal Construction	\$ 59,788
				Mobilization (10% of Construction)	\$ 5,979
				Construction Oversight (20% of Construction)	\$ 11,958
				Total Construction	\$ 77,724
				Contingency (20%)	\$ 15,500
				Total	\$ 93,224
3	Hells Canyon				
3.1	Channel Relocation	154	CY	\$ 5.00	\$ 770
3.2	Site Grading	1	LS	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500
3.3	Reclamation	1	LS	\$ 750.00	\$ 750
				Subtotal Construction	\$ 3,020
				Mobilization (80% of Construction)	\$ 2,416
				Construction Oversight (40% of Construction)	\$ 1,208
				Total Construction	\$ 6,644
				Contingency (20%)	\$ 1,300
				Total	\$ 7,944
4	Side Channel Inlet				
4.1	Inlet Grading	1	LS	\$ 4,200.00	\$ 4,200
4.2	Install Class II Rip Rap	1677	CY	\$ 70.00	\$ 117,390
				Subtotal Construction	\$ 121,590
				Mobilization (4% of Construction)	\$ 4,864
				Construction Oversight (4% of Construction)	\$ 4,864
				Total Construction	\$ 131,317
				Contingency (20%)	\$ 26,300
				Total	\$ 157,617
5	Diversion Structure - Rock Ramp				
5.1	Extend peninsula	1	LS	\$ 4,300.00	\$ 4,300
5.2	Construct new diversion structure (3'x8' headgate)	1	LS	\$ 55,000.00	\$ 55,000
5.3	Riprap around new structure (Class I)	86	CY	\$ 38.00	\$ 3,268
5.4	Construct rock ramp (Class II Rip Rap)	718	CY	\$ 70.00	\$ 50,260
5.5	Narrow side channel	1777	CY	\$ 13.00	\$ 23,101
5.6	Remove existing headgate structure	1	LS	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000
5.7	Replace culverts (30" CMP)	80	LF	\$ 200	\$ 16,000
5.8	Reseed Channel Narrowing Area	1.3	AC	\$ 1,300	\$ 1,690
				Subtotal Construction	\$ 154,619
				Mobilization (10% of Construction)	\$ 15,462
				Construction Oversight (8% of Construction)	\$ 12,370
				Total Construction	\$ 182,450
				Contingency (20%)	\$ 36,500
				Total	\$ 218,950
6	Existing Side Channel Entrance				
6.1	Channel Fill (Plug)	4523	CY	\$ 8.00	\$ 36,184
6.2	Mainstem Bank Armoring (Cobble)	203	CY	\$ 8.00	\$ 1,624
6.3	Wood and Brush Treatment	217	LF	\$ 43.00	\$ 9,331
				Subtotal Construction	\$ 47,139
				Mobilization (10% of Construction)	\$ 4,700
				Construction Oversight (10% of Construction)	\$ 4,700
				Total Construction	\$ 56,500
				Contingency (20%)	\$ 11,300
				Total	\$ 67,800
7	Side Channel Construction				
7.1	New Side Channel Excavation (2000 LF)	9718	CY	\$ 9.00	\$ 87,462
7.2	Habitat Pool & Point Bar Construction	37	EA	\$ 6,600.00	\$ 244,200
				Subtotal Construction	\$ 331,662
				Mobilization (10% of Construction)	\$ 33,200
				Construction Oversight (8% of Construction)	\$ 26,500
				Total Construction	\$ 391,400
				Contingency (20%)	\$ 78,300
				Total	\$ 469,700
8	Mainstem Bank Build-Out				
8.1	Gravel Bar Relocation	2395	CY	\$ 7.00	\$ 16,765
8.2	Bank Armoring (Cobble)	402	CY	\$ 8.00	\$ 3,216
8.3	Wood & Brush Treatment	648	LF	\$ 43.00	\$ 27,864
				Subtotal Construction	\$ 47,845
				Mobilization (10% of Construction)	\$ 4,800
				Construction Oversight (8% of Construction)	\$ 3,800
				Total Construction	\$ 56,400
				Contingency (20%)	\$ 11,300
				Total	\$ 67,700
9	Fencing Plan				
9.1	Electric Fence	7215	LF	\$ 6.00	\$ 43,290
9.2	Barbed Wire	2730	LF	\$ 2.00	\$ 5,460
				Subtotal Construction	\$ 48,750
				Mobilization (5% of Construction)	\$ 2,400
				Construction Oversight (4% of Construction)	\$ 2,000
				Total Construction	\$ 53,200
				Contingency (20%)	\$ 10,600
				Total	\$ 63,800

Total Construction \$ 1,090,348
Total Mobilization \$ 101,414
Total Oversight \$ 94,992
20% Contingency \$ 257,350.80
Grand Total \$ 1,544,105

**UPPER JEFFERSON CHANNEL RESTORATION PROJECT
LANDOWNER AGREEMENT**

This agreement dated September 6th, 2023 between the Ruby Valley Conservation District and Sandru Ranch, (landowner) attn. Rick Sandru is entered to authorize repairs on the Upper Jefferson Channel Restoration Project (project) along the Jefferson River. This restoration and irrigation project is in Township 02, Range 06, Section 34. Work performed will be as described in the design and construction plans to be submitted by Confluence Consulting, Inc.

This project is intended to improve river conditions on the Jefferson River to enhance aquatic habitat, stabilize banklines and improve irrigation conveyance to the Gideon-Root Ditch. Therefore, the landowner agrees to protect and maintain the investment of this project for a minimum of 20 years. This agreement will expire on **September 6th, 2043.**

Notwithstanding the foregoing, it shall not be the landowner's responsibility to repair or replace project improvements should they be damaged, changed or destroyed by circumstances outside of the landowner's control; such as, but not limited to, natural means and damage by other individuals not under the control and supervision of the landowner. The landowner guarantees ownership of the above-described land and warrants that there are no outstanding rights that will interfere with this cooperative agreement. Further, if land ownership is transferred, this agreement will remain valid for the period of this agreement.

This agreement may be terminated in writing by either party by providing thirty (30) days advance notice. If terminated by the landowner or the restoration site is degraded due to purposeful activities of the private landowner, the landowner agrees at landowner's sole discretion, to either

1. Reimburse Ruby Valley Conservation District for the cost of repair, or,
2. Reimburse Ruby Valley Conservation District for the "remaining value" of the project. The "remaining value" is defined as the original cost of the material and labor paid for by Ruby Valley Conservation District for the project construction only, less the loss of value of grazing to landowner and any material or labor that landowner provides. This net value of the project will then be divided by the term (20 years). If, for example, there is ten (10) years remaining, then one-half (1/2) of the net value will be the "remaining value".

Ruby Valley Conservation District does not assume jurisdiction over the private property as a result of this agreement. The private property owner retains all normal property rights including the right to control trespass. Landowner agrees to allow Ruby Valley Conservation District, its employees, agents, contractors, and subcontractors access to the site for purposes contemplated in this Agreement. By entering into this agreement the landowner is not required to provide public access to the restoration project area, above and beyond any existing legal requirements.

By: Gary Gier
 Gary Gier, Chairman
 Ruby Valley Conservation District
 Date 10/30/2023

By: Rick Sandru
 Rick Sandru, Owner
 Sandru Ranch
 Date 10-28-23