



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT MILES CITY FIELD OFFICE NEWS

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Cherry Creek restoration project nears completion

TERRY, Mont. --- Bureau of Land Management Miles City staff have largely completed stream-side restoration efforts along Cherry Creek located about three miles north of Terry and east of Montana State Route 253.

Earlier this spring, work crews planted 5,050 cuttings and 1,050 rooted seedlings along a 2 ¼ mile stretch of the creek on federal land. More enhancement work remains before the projected completion later this September.

“As far as on-the-ground plantings, this is easily the largest riparian project this field office has undertaken,” said BLM Assistant Field Manager Dale Tribby, in Miles City.

According to Tribby, the project has attracted attention from the BLM Montana state and Washington D.C. offices, as well as non-government wildlife agencies. In April, the BLM played host to a group of wildlife managers involved with wild turkey management and habitat restoration—including the National Wild Turkey Federation—who toured the project. It is likely the Cherry Creek operation will be replicated to some degree in other riparian work in eastern Montana and other portions of the state, said Tribby.

The project originally began in 2005 with a survey of the creek for habitat, riparian, fisheries and aquatic invertebrate values. According to BLM Fishery Biologist Joe Platz, the survey showed that the

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stream was in poor health. Subsequent review by BLM personnel confirmed the stream's condition and determined that something needed to be done to improve the in-stream channel characteristics and the adjacent riparian area.

Later in 2006, work crews constructed sediment fences along a 3/4 mile stretch of the creek to stabilize the channel and catch fine sediment as it traveled downstream, a vital component to build stream banks capable of supporting vegetation.

The construction of sediment fences for a little over a mile are all that remains before the project is concluded, said Platz.

Platz has performed a variety of roles throughout the project's history --from conception through implementation-- and utilized personnel from both the Montana Conservation Corps and the Miles City Field Office to make the improvements. According to Platz, the project was originally scheduled to cover a three year period and is ahead of schedule.

The planted cuttings and rooted seedling species included cottonwood, willow, chokecherry, golden current, green ash and box elder.

Work crews planted the trees by hand in holes dug using a combination of tractor-driven rock auger, water-jet stinger and hand-driven spud bar. Site-specific considerations determined placement of the plantings in order to stabilize the banks and get the transplants deep enough to access the underground water table throughout the drier months.

A variety of methods were employed to increase survival rates among the cuttings and seedlings which so far, 90 percent are showing significant growth. Potting soil, mulch, shade screens, weed free barrier mats, grazing exclosures and water-absorbing polymer crystals for time-released moisture were used to give the plants a fighting chance to establish themselves.

BLM personnel will continue to monitor the project's progress and make adjustments as needed to ensure the success of the improvements beyond the September completion date.

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Photos and Cutlines:

**High-resolution copies of the following photos are available by contacting Mark Jacobsen at: mark_jacobsen@blm.gov or (406) 233-2831.*



Caption for photo: Cherry Ck project

--- Bundles of willow cuttings are staged prior to planting on BLM-administered land along Cherry Creek Mar. 28, 2007. Crews planted 5,050 cuttings and 1,050 rooted seedlings as part of the project.



Caption for photo: Cherry Ck project (1)

--- BLM Maintenance Worker Lynn Pluhar operates a tractor driven auger to drill planting holes for willow and cottonwood cuttings along Cherry Creek in Prairie County Mar. 28, 2007. Crews followed with a water-jet stinger to hydrate the holes prior to planting.



Caption for photo: Cherry Ck project (2)

--- BLM Range Specialist Jody Fossum carries a bundle of cuttings to a staging area prior to planting on BLM-administered land along Cherry Creek Apr. 2, 2007. The day's work crew remained undaunted in spite of rain, sleet, low temps and plenty of mud.



Caption for photo: Cherry Ck project (3)

--- BLM Fishery Biologist Joe Platz uses a water-jet “stinger” to hydrate planting holes prior to the emplacement of willow and cottonwood cuttings on Cherry Creek Apr. 4, 2007. The apparatus forced water into a pre-made hole, eliminated air pockets and created a seal between the cuttings and the soil for more effective root generation.



Caption for photo: Cherry Ck project (4)

--- MCFO Fishery Biologist Joe Platz (left) discusses Cherry Creek riparian restoration methodology with wild turkey managers on BLM-administered land in Prairie County May 3, 2007. The Western Wild Turkey Workshop was jointly hosted by the BLM and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks.



Caption for photo: Cherry Ck project (5)

--- Transplanted cottonwood seedlings protected by a grazing exclosure fence exhibit promising growth on BLM-administered land along Cherry Creek July 5, 2007. Potting soil, shade screens and weed barrier mats were also used to help the plants establish themselves.



Caption for photo: Cherry Ck project (6)

--- A bank-side willow seedling displays significant growth progress in its new home along Cherry Creek July 5, 2007. Around 90 percent of the cuttings and plantings on the project exhibit similar progress.