

South slope restoration, fir removal, winter sunflowers, black bear

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South-facing slopes in the draws are often dry, hot, and devoid of rich organic material. These conditions cause erosion and make it hard for plants to establish.

To increase the likelihood of plant recruitment, we spread copious native seeds and covered them with compost and hay, which will retain moisture and add nutrients to the seed bed.





Nearly a decade ago, we planted pairs of trees or shrubs behind erosion control structures on south facing slopes (top). We've decided to remove most planted junipers from these areas so mountain mahogany and bitterbrush can flourish (bottom).



The field crew started a multi-year conifer thinning project using electric chainsaws. We are focusing on young doug-firs that encroach on important winter range.



We continue to build buck and rail fences through the cold and snowy months. Our most recent fence replaced the metal exclosures that protected the Tongue Creek Orchard. Bears and birds will now have unfettered access to the fruits.



I accompanied our bear research team on a hibernating bear wellness check. The scientists made sure this bear's collar fit properly, checked batteries, took vitals, assessed health, and left him curled up in his cozy den. They will run similar checks on more collared bears this winter.





Summer's golden sunflower fields have turned to nodding brown heads packed with seeds. Birds and ungulates took notice.





Black-capped chickadees and California quail are the most common visitors to the sunflower field. The songbirds pluck seeds from the heads and the gamebirds forage for fallen morsels on the ground.



Beavers remain active along the banks of the North Floodplain.





As the snow piles up, the horses burn more energy finding their next meal. From dawn until dusk, they paw the earth in hopes of exposing more food to eat.

A moment of sunshine illuminates this mallard's green head.

