Spring seeding, biomass collection, willows, aspen, beaver

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By Jeff Clarke

The field crew visited 140 locations and collected vegetation, counted ungulate scat piles, and documented the relative height of the existing vegetation. Teagan will use this information to determine where the elk, deer and horses spent most of their time and what they ate while they were there.

We planted 2,600 willow cuttings into a matted reed canary grass patch in the Northern Floodplain. Before we planted the dormant stems, we limbed them and dipped their tips in root growth hormone.


This week, little buds began to pop from the once dormant stems.

We dug up several hundred aspen suckers and transplanted them next to the willows in the same reed canary grass patch.

To plant the aspens, we had to make larger holes in the black mat. I worry that the reed canary grass will find its way through these openings.

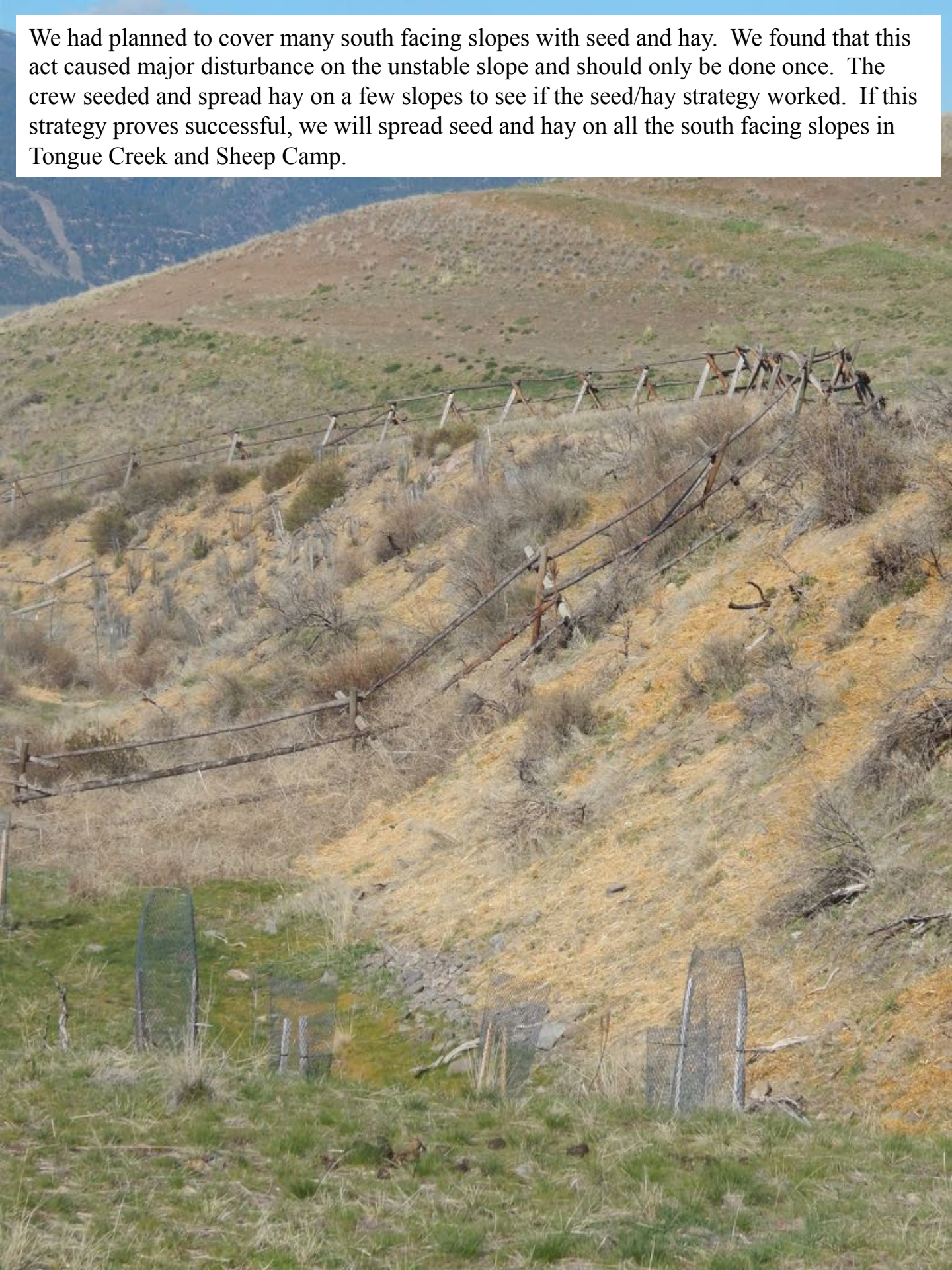
A beaver started the process that will fall this mature cottonwood into the clubhouse pond. We debate if we should let this natural process continue…or protect the mature tree?


None of the eight duck tubes have been occupied…yet.

The Bitterroot River has carved an ephemeral channel through the north end of the Northern Floodplain. The channel gets deeper every year and one day may carry water all year long.

The crew walked down the bottom of Tongue Creek and Sheep Camp and spread basin wild rye seed in every open niche they could find.

We had planned to cover many south facing slopes with seed and hay. We found that this act caused major disturbance on the unstable slope and should only be done once. The crew seeded and spread hay on a few slopes to see if the seed/hay strategy worked. If this strategy proves successful, we will spread seed and hay on all the south facing slopes in Tongue Creek and Sheep Camp.



Over the past few years, we've placed many large metal exclosures around suckering aspen and cottonwood stands. The main goal was to protect the trees, but we've found that the ground cover also benefited.

Elsewhere, a pair of kestrels looked for a new nesting site.

In the drill-seeded areas, green rows started to emerge.