

MONTANA RANCHLAND RECLAMATION

Upper Ruby River, MT



PROJECT OVERVIEW

PROJECT / CUSTOMER:

Private Rancher

LOCATION:

Upper Ruby River, MT

PRODUCT / SOLUTIONS:

- NutraFix 1-4-1

CHALLENGE:

After several attempts to restore the pastures using conventional methods such as herbicides, seeding, and variations in grazing management were unsuccessful, the landowners sought alternative solutions. They contacted Ferguson Waterworks for assistance.

SOLUTION:

Ferguson Waterworks recommended applying a micronutrient fertilizer to assess the potential for perennial grass reestablishment. In addition, we introduced NutraFix to both reduce invasive plant dominance and also enhance the foraging quality.

THE FERGUSON ADVANTAGE:

- Commitment to going the extra mile(s) for our customers
- A complete offering of Waterworks, Geo, and Stormwater products
- Strategic national network of locations
- Value-engineering services driven by expert associates with industry experience

BACKGROUND AND SCOPE

For over 100 years this historic, high-elevation ranch in the dry valleys of southwest Montana was used primarily for livestock production. This changed in the early 2000s when the land came under new ownership. At this time, the new owners decided to use the land for bison production rather than cattle. The rancher was determined to implement sustainable operations. For example, they instituted novel grazing methods in order to promote soil health. They also converted previously farmed and irrigated upland pastures to dryland grazing. Unfortunately, invasive annual grasses such as cheatgrass and low-cover perennial grasses took over the vegetation, limiting the foraging value.

METHOD

NutraFix 1-4-1 was applied to a 10-acre section of pastureland in order to test its success. The native perennial fertilizer was applied with a truck and a pull-behind hopper-spreader cart. Following equipment calibration, multiple perpendicular passes were made to ensure uniform coverage. Fertilizer application occurred in the first week of May 2019, early in the growing season when cheatgrass plants were approximately 2 inches tall. Annual vegetation monitoring was performed subsequently to assess treatment efficacy.

RESULTS

NutraFix stimulated perennial grasses in the seed bank and as a result it created a new plant composition from invasive annual grass dominance to desirable forage. When NutraFix was applied, there was essentially no desirable vegetation. Ranch maps actually labeled this pasture area as a “cheatgrass pasture.” Two short months after the application of the fertilizer and NutraFix and change was already evident.