

Conservation District and Plant Materials Center
Join Forces to Assist National Guard
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The South Bingham Soil Conservation District and the Aberdeen Plant Materials Center are beginning work on a reimbursable project with the Idaho Army National Guard to provide assistance in testing and establishment of vegetative cover to rehabilitate sites on the Orchard Tank Training Range located south of Boise, Idaho.

The Training Range is unique, in that unlike most other military installations, the land is managed by the Bureau of Land Management for multiple-use. Grazing, recreation, and (believe it or not) armored tank training all occur on the land. Many areas within the Training Range have been degraded by these uses and wildfire over the years.

The Conservation District and the Plant Materials Center have begun seed germination research on tapertip hawksbeard and sharp-leaf penstemon, two native forbs that the National Guard would like to see increased on the Training Range to help restore plant diversity. Once we learn seed germination characteristics of these two species we will begin establishing seed production nurseries to increase seed.

We are also planning to establish two off-center test sites at the Training Range to test establishment and performance of other native plant species. The reason for establishing two off-center test sites is because the Training Range lies in two different ecological zones. The northern portion is a bluebunch wheatgrass/sagebrush plant community and the southern portion is a salt desert shrub plant community dominated by winterfat and shadscale.

Other tasks to be completed include testing seedbed preparation and planting techniques, developing efficient methods for collection of winterfat seed, and helping the National Guard develop commercial seed production avenues for large scale seed increase. The project is proposed to continue through 2001.

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