

**NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
DECISION RECORD
BASIN FIRE, X504
BLM/EK/PL2000/039**

Finding of No Significant Impact:

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Supplement Environmental Assessment BLM/EK/PL2000/039, I have determined that the proposed action will not have significant impacts on the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

Decision:

It is my decision to implement the Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan (NFRP) Supplement as described in the Environmental Assessment for the Basin Fire BLM/PL2000/039. Over 3650 acres of public rangeland managed by the Bureau of Land Management Elko Field Office were burned during this fire. Approximately 1170 acres of the burned public land acres will be rehabilitated by planting of multiple species seed mixtures. Over 8 miles of roads will be repaired and 3 miles of dozer line will be rehabilitated. In addition, a wild horse gather of approximately 44 horses will be necessary to allow for rest from grazing for the burned and treated areas. Post-fire grazing management, including the period of time needed for closure, will be determined based on monitoring and achievement of site specific resource objectives.

Rationale:

Implementation of the proposed action described in the NFRP Supplement EA for the Basin Fire will protect soils in the burned area, including preventing potential loss of soil due to wind and water erosion; will reduce potential invasion and establishment of noxious weeds and cheatgrass; will provide quality forage for livestock and wildlife; and will facilitate meeting established standards and guidelines for livestock grazing.

The Elko Resource Management Plan is silent for the proposed action. The proposed action is consistent with the objectives of the RMP and is consistent with federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and plans to the maximum extent possible

Monitoring:

Post-treatment monitoring studies will be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed treatments and to determine the time frame for reopening lands for grazing.

Helen Hankins
Elko Field Office

Date

**NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
BASIN FIRE (X504)
BLM/EK/PL-2000-039**

Introduction:

This Supplement Environmental Assessment (EA) tiers to the Elko Field Office FY 2000 Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Environmental Assessment (NRFPEA) BLM/EK/PL2000/037. The Proposed Action includes NRFPEA Treatment # 1 (Grazing closure), 2 (Planting of multiple species seed mixtures), 5 (Dozer line Rehabilitation), 6 (Road repair), 7 (Wild horse removal), and 9 (Herbicide site preparation treatment). The format of this Supplement EA follows the outline in the Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Handbook, BLM Manual Handbook H-1742-1 dated 7/27/99.

List of Preparers:

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Project Area Description:

A. Fire Description:

The fire was started by a lightning strike and was reported on June 23, 2000 and was declared controlled on July 27, 2000. It burned 3656 acres of public land and no private land. One grazing allotment was affected: the Browne Allotment of which the fire impacted 17% of the total allotment. No structures were burned and no new dozer lines were constructed. However, reuse of 1999 Sadler Fire dozer lines, which were located adjacent to the new fire, caused new damage to these formally rehabilitated lines.

B. Vegetation and Soil Description:

The burned area ranges in elevation from 5775 ft to 6440 ft. The fire burned in a predominantly sagebrush/cheatgrass community and through a juniper tree forest on the ridge. As a result of this fire and last year's Sadler Fire, a large portion of the juniper trees on the northwest to northern end of the ridge have burned. There are no perennial drainages in the Basin Fire. Soils are moderately deep to deep with slow to rapid runoff. Both water and wind erosion hazard under preburn conditions are considered slight.

Proposed Project Treatments:

A. Revegetation:

1. Wildlife aerial seedings:

Approximately 687 acres will be seeded with bluebunch wheatgrass, Indian rice grass, Basin big sagebrush, and rice hulls (used as a seed dispersal mechanism). Seed would be aerially applied between late October through December the year following OUST herbicide treatment (see discussion under site preparation below). If possible, seed would be broadcast on snow to aid in germination and reduce seed consumption by rodents and birds. The purpose of the seeding is to provide forage for livestock and wildlife, particularly critical winter range forage for mule deer, and to reduce the potential for the invasion of invasive, nonnative weed species.

2. Rangeland drill seeding:

Approximately 483 acres on the southern end of the fire will be drilled using established drilling techniques with Vavilov Siberian wheatgrass, Nordan crested wheatgrass, and Hycrest crested wheatgrass. In addition, the same 483 acres will be aerial seeded with a broadcast aerial seed mixture of Immigrant forage kochia, Western yarrow, and rice hulls. Application timing would be the same as for the wildlife aerial seedings described above, allowing for a year of rest after the OUST site preparation treatment, and following plowing of the same acreage, as described below under site preparation..

The purpose of both seedings is to provide forage for livestock and wildlife and reduce the potential for the invasion of invasive, nonnative weed species.

3. Wild horse removal:

Approximately 44 wild horses will need to be removed from the Diamond Hills Herd Management Area the areas is closed to rest the seeded and unseeded burned areas.

B. Structures: None

C. Erosion Control Treatments:

1. Road repair:

Approximately 8 miles of suppression-damaged roads from Railroad Pass Road to the Sadler Basin will be regraded to reduce erosion and widening by travelers trying to get around impassable areas.

2. Dozer line rehabilitation:

Approximately 3 miles of bulldozer-damaged areas in the northwest corner of the fire will be rehabilitated by pushing back berms and regrading the disturbed areas. These rehabilitated areas will then be drill and aerial seeded with the drill and broadcast aerial seeding mixes described above to reduce erosion and encourage revegetation.

D. Site Preparation:

1. Rangeland seeding plowing:

Approximately 483 acres of the southern end of the fire would be plowed to a depth of 6-8 inches to reduce cheatgrass in preparation for drill seeding described above.

2. OUST treatments:

Approximately 687 acres on the east side of the fire and 483 acres on the southern end of the fire would be aerially sprayed with the herbicide OUST (sulfometuron methyl). This herbicide is approved for rangeland aerial spraying in Nevada by the Nevada Department of Agriculture and is also approved for rangeland use in Nevada by BLM. The purpose of the spraying is to kill viable cheatgrass in the burned area before aerial seeding to reduce the chance that cheatgrass will germinate in the area after rehabilitation seeding efforts.

Consideration of Critical Elements and Resources:

The following critical elements of the human environment are not present or are not affected by the proposed action or alternative:

- ACECs
- Environmental Justice
- Farmlands, prime or unique
- Floodplains
- Wastes, hazardous/solid
- Water Quality, surface/ground
- Wetlands/Riparian Zones
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Wilderness

Critical elements and resources brought forward for analysis:

A. Air Quality:

The burned area is highly susceptible to wind erosion until revegetation occurs. Wind erosion can increase Particulate Matter #10 (PM#10) emissions causing exceedence of PM #10 air quality standards which can negatively affect human health. In addition, airborne dust can cause visibility and safety problems on roads in the area. The proposed vegetation, erosion control, and site prep treatments will encourage regrowth of vegetation, thus reducing future potential air quality impacts.

B. Cultural Resources:

The Basin Fire occurred within an area known to archaeologists as the Central Great Basin which has been inhabited by humans for approximately 12,000 years. Archaeological sites and cultural properties in this area must be afforded protection whenever possible. Section 106 of the Natural Historic Preservation Act mandates that the federal government will account for cultural resources in its projects and undertakings, including fire rehabilitation efforts. Ground disturbing activities such as discing, drilling, dozer line rehabilitation, fence construction, and road repair could damage cultural sites. Therefore, areas designated for mechanized seeding and other ground disturbance will be inventoried for cultural resources before the disturbance occurs in accordance with the State Protocol Agreement Between BLM, Nevada and the Nevada State Office of Historic Preservation (SHPO). At a minimum, to reduce potential impacts to cultural resources, activities that involve mechanized surface disturbance of less than 10 cm depth will generally have transect spacing of 100 meters. More intense inventory will be used for highly sensitive areas. If surface disturbance is greater than 10 cm, then 30 meter transect intervals will be used.

All cultural resources discovered or relocated will be plotted on maps and at a minimum will be recorded on the Nevada IMACS short form. Resources except those previously determined not eligible, by BLM and SHPO, or that have been fully mitigated, will be flagged for avoidance and avoided during rehabilitation activities. Flagging will be placed to minimize the potential for looting and vandalism and removed as soon as possible.

C. Invasive, Nonnative Species:

Fire suppression efforts, including dozer line construction and use of engines and other mechanized vehicles, is likely to have introduced cheatgrass and noxious weed species seeds into the burned area. In order to reduce the potential impacts of an invasion of noxious weeds, monitoring must be conducted after rehabilitation treatments are completed. If noxious weeds are discovered to have invaded the burn area, herbicide treatments would need to be implemented to reduce the spread of the noxious weeds. Monitoring and noxious weed treatment would help to prevent or reduce any such noxious weed impacts in the Basin Fire area.

D. Native American Religious Concerns:

Native Americans will be consulted as appropriate prior to any ground disturbing activities such as discing and drilling. If traditional cultural properties or other areas having traditional or

religious significance to Native Americans are discovered as a result of this consultation, then BLM will insure that measures are taken to avoid or reduce impacts to these areas of concern to Native Americans.

E. Threatened, Endangered, Candidate, or Sensitive Species:

No threatened or endangered plant species are known to occur in the burn area. The sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) has been designated by the BLM Nevada State Director as a sensitive species and therefore afforded the same protection as a candidate species. Although the suspected causes of sage grouse decline are numerous, loss of habitat, including loss by fire, ranks at the top of the list. Rehabilitation of sage grouse habitat, and the prevention of invasion by fire prone annual weeds such as cheatgrass, is a wildlife priority of both BLM and the Nevada Department of Wildlife. The proposed seeding treatments and rest from grazing pressure are designed to restore sagebrush habitat and/or reduce the impacts from the invasion or re-invasion of fire prone annual weeds.

F. Visual Resources:

The burned area is within Visual Resource Management Class 3 and changes in this class should be subordinate to the existing landscape. Both the fire itself and fire suppression activities such as creation of dozer lines, have resulted in visual impacts to the area. Revegetation efforts are designed to blend into the background without attracting undue attention and aid in restoring the area to a more characteristic landscape. Recontouring and seeding of dozer lines would reduce adverse visual impacts as well.

G. Wild Horses:

Over 3600 acres of the Diamond Hills North Herd Management Area (HMA) were burned in the Basin Fire. In October, 1999, the BLM gathered wild horses from this area and areas outside the HMA in response to the Sadler Complex Fire which burned over 90% of the HMA. Recent census flights have found a total of 44 horses which eluded capture during the gather in and around the area. Under the proposed action, wild horses, as well as livestock, would be excluded from the burned area. A wild horse gather would be necessary in order to rest the burned area. This gather would reduce the wild horse population to a more manageable level, and allow for better redistribution of cattle off of the burned areas. This would eliminate grazing impacts to the burned/rehabilitated areas during the rest period and allow for faster vegetative recovery.

H. Wildlife:

Wildlife was adversely impacted by the Basin Fire primarily through temporary loss of habitat through removal of vegetation by the fire. The proposed rehabilitation treatments include resting the area from livestock grazing, and seeding several areas with seed mixtures conducive to wildlife use. In particular, proposed seedings are specifically designed to benefit sage grouse and mule deer. In addition, aerial and drill seeding of lower elevation areas will help establish shrub species that would out compete exotic invading plant species, as well as provide critical forage and cover.

I. Grazing:

The proposed closures to grazing within the burned area would protect seeding efforts and aid in natural revegetation of burned public rangeland, while reducing the potential for future noxious weed and cheatgrass infestations. Grazing closures will also improve future forage conditions for both livestock and wildlife. However, grazing closure and relocation of livestock will have some short term adverse impacts on ranchers in the area who normally use the allotment for grazing. The actual AUM losses suffered by ranchers have not been determined at this point. Through field inventories and monitoring, GIS analyses, and consultation, cooperation, and coordination with individual permittees, specific rest periods and other grazing management options will be identified to reduce impacts to ranchers where possible.

Project Cost Summary: (the cost summary information can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the Elko 13 Fire Complex)

Project Maps: (project maps can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the Elko 13 Fire Complex)

Cost/Risk Assessment: (the cost/risk assessment can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the Elko 13 Fire Complex)

Native/Nonnative Worksheet: (the native/nonnative worksheet can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the Elko 13 Fire Complex)