

**NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
DECISION RECORD
DUNPHY FIRE (X-282)
BLM/EK/PL2001/064**

Finding of No Significant Impact:

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Supplement Environmental Assessment BLM/EK/PL2001/064, 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 Dunphy Fire BLM/PL2001/064. Over 661 acres of public rangeland managed by the Bureau of Land Management Elko Field Office and 9061 private acres were burned during this fire. Approximately 260 acres of the burned public land acres will be aeriually seeded with a multiple species seed mixture. Approximately 0.5 mile of existing fence will be repaired to facilitate grazing closures. Monitoring of the burn for infestation of noxious weeds will be conducted. 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 Dunphy 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
DUNPHY FIRE (X-282)
BLM/EK/PL-2001/064**

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 NFRPEA Treatment # 1 (Grazing closure), 2 (Planting of multiple species seed mixtures), and 8 (Invasive, nonnative weed species control. 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 and is consistent with the draft Interagency Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Handbook, Version 1.0, dated 6/14/01.

List of Preparers:

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Project Area Description:

A. Fire Description:

The Dunphy Fire was started by a lightning strike and was reported on August 8, 2001 and was controlled on August 13, 2001. It burned over 661 acres of public land and 9061 acres of private land. No grazing allotments were affected and no structures were burned in the Dunphy Fire.

B. Vegetation and Soil Description:

The burned area ranges in elevation from 4600 to 5404 feet and the average annual precipitation is 9 inches. The vegetation was comprised of Wyoming big sagebrush, fourwing saltbush, greasewood, and white rubber rabbitbrush with an understory of crested wheatgrass and cheatgrass.

Foothill soils have slopes of 4 to 30 % and are moderately deep and well drained. Soils include gravelly loams and cobbly loams and runoff is rapid. The hazard of erosion from water is high and the hazard of erosion from wind is slight. Alluvial fans have slopes of 4 to 15 % and are very deep and very well drained. Soils are fine sandy loams and runoff is medium. Hazard of water erosion is slight and hazard of wind erosion is high. Wind and water erosion rates would be higher than preburn levels until the vegetation is reestablished.

Proposed Project Treatments:

A. Revegetation:

1. Aerial wildlife seeding:

Approximately 260 acres of public rangeland would be aerial seeded with a mixture comprised of forage kochia, Seccar wheatgrass, small burnet and Basin big sagebrush. The purpose of the seeding would be to provide forage for livestock and wildlife, particularly critical winter range forage for antelope and mule deer and to reduce the potential for the invasion of invasive, nonnative weed species. If possible, seed would be broadcast on snow to aid in germination and reduce seed consumption by rodents and birds.

2. Monitoring to detect noxious weed invasion of burned areas:

If noxious weed infestations are detected after fire rehabilitation efforts, appropriate Integrated Pest Management (IPM) control measures would be implemented to control the invasion. In particular, any disturbed dozer lines and adjacent areas would be targeted for this noxious weed monitoring and subsequent treatment if weeds are detected.

B. Structures:

1. Fencing:

Approximately 0.5 mile of existing allotment boundary fence would be repaired to keep livestock in the proper allotment and allow closure of seeded areas to grazing for a period to be determined by post-rehabilitation monitoring. This fence repair is needed to protect the proposed seeding treatments and to allow for vegetation to become reestablished.

C. Erosion Control Treatments: None

D. Site Preparation: None

E. Other: None

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
- Wetlands/Riparian Zones
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Wilderness

Critical elements and resources brought forward for analysis:

A. Air Quality:

The burned area would be 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 and erosion control treatments would encourage regrowth of vegetation, thus reducing future potential air quality impacts.

B. Cultural Resources:

The Dunphy Fire occurred within an area known to archaeologists as the Central Great Basin which has been inhabited by humans for approximately 12,000 years. BLM archaeologists intensively inventoried the public lands with the burn after fire suppression. A recent (post-1950) dump, lacking any association with a historical theme or context, was located. It is not believed to be eligible to the National Register of Historic Places, but should be flagged and avoided during ground altering rehabilitation activities.

C. Native American Religious Concerns:

By law, policy and executive order, BLM is required to undertake a good-faith consultation process with regional Native American tribal and band governments prior to projects that might affect Native American sacred areas, Traditional Cultural Properties or other traditional values. Native Americans would be consulted as appropriate prior to any ground disturbing activities or herbicide treatments. If the BLM obtains information identifying Traditional Cultural Properties or other areas having traditional or religious significance, then the BLM would insure that reasonable measures are taken to avoid impacts to these areas of concern to Native Americans.

D. 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 of fire-prone annual weeds.

E. Migratory Birds

The proposed restorative actions are located in a sagebrush habitat type. The Nevada Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plan identifies the following bird species associated with this physiographic region: sage grouse (obligate), black rosy finch, ferruginous hawk, gray flycatcher, loggerhead shrike, vesper sparrow, prairie falcon, sage sparrow, sage thrasher, Swainson's hawk, burrowing owl, calliope hummingbird, Brewer's sparrow, Western meadowlark, black-throated sparrow, lark sparrow, green-tailed towhee, Brewer's blackbird, horned lark, and lark sparrow.

The greatest threat to these sagebrush-dependant migratory bird species is type conversion of sagebrush communities. Maintaining complete, diverse sagebrush communities is integral to conservation efforts for these species. Low elevation sagebrush sites, such as the project area, are vulnerable to conversion to cheatgrass types following wildfire. The proposed action to reseed with aggressive perennial grasses to prevent cheatgrass from dominating the site, coupled with secondary efforts to re-establish sagebrush on the stabilized site (as necessary) should provide beneficial impacts to these species and is consistent with the conservation measures listed in Section 3(e) of the President's Migratory Bird Executive Order.

F. Visual Resources:

The proposed project treatment area is within Visual Resource Management Class IV and the objective of this class is to provide for management activities which require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high.

Within Class IV VRM areas, management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements. 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. Seeding the burned areas and dozer lines would serve to reduce the visual impacts in the area.

G. Wildlife:

Wildlife was adversely impacted by the Dunphy 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 with seed mixtures conducive to wildlife use. Aerial seeding of lower elevation areas would help establish shrub species that would out compete exotic invading plant species, as well as provide critical forage and cover.

H. 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 would 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 would be identified to reduce impacts to ranchers where possible.

I. Water Quality, surface/ground:

There are no perennial streams within the burned area. Precipitation events could cause higher than normal runoff until the vegetation is restored to preburn conditions. Erosion is expected to be minimal because of the low severity of the burn.

J. Invasive, Nonnative Species:

Fire suppression efforts, including dozer line construction and use of engines and other mechanized vehicles, may have introduced noxious weed species seeds into the burned area. In order to reduce the potential impacts of an invasion of noxious weeds, monitoring should be conducted after rehabilitation treatments are completed. If noxious weeds are discovered to have invaded the burn area, further herbicide treatments would need to be implemented to reduce the spread of the noxious weeds. The proposed noxious weed monitoring would help to prevent or reduce noxious weed invasions of the Bailey burn area.

K. Cumulative Impacts:

Cumulative impacts for proposed Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation treatments are discussed in the programmatic Elko Field Office FY 2000 Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Environmental Assessment (NFRPEA) BLM/EK/PL2000/037, which is available for review at

the BLM Elko Field Office.

Project Cost Summary: (the cost summary information can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the August 2001 Fire Complex.)

Project Maps: (project maps can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the August 2001 Fire Complex.)

Cost/Risk Assessment: (the cost/risk assessment can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the August 2001 Fire Complex.)

Native/Nonnative Worksheet: (the native/nonnative worksheet can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the August 2001 Fire Complex.)