

**NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
RODEO CREEK FIRE (X-272)
BLM/EK/PL-2001/072**

Introduction:

This Supplemental Environmental Assessment (EA) tiers to the Elko Field Office FY 2000 Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Environmental Assessment (NFRPEA) BLM/EK/PL-2000/037. The Proposed Action includes the following NFRPEA Treatments: 1 (Construction and Repair of Fence to Facilitate Grazing Closure), 2 (Planting of Multiple Species Seed Mixtures), 6 (Road Repair), and 10 (Cultural Resource Site Stabilization and Protection). The format of this Supplement EA follows the outline in the Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Handbook, BLM Manual Handbook H-1742-1, dated July 27, 1999, and is consistent with the draft Interagency Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Handbook, Version 1.0, dated June 14, 2001.

List of Preparers:

Tom Warren	Fire Rehabilitation Manager
Marlene Braun	Environmental Coordinator
Donna Nyrehn	Rangeland Management Specialist
Bill Fawcett	Archaeologist
Bruce Piper	GIS Specialist
Chuck Keeperts	Hydrologist
Dan Kohring	Natural Resource Specialist (Noxious Weeds)
Ken Wilkinson	Wildlife Biologist
Steve Dondero	Outdoor Recreation Planner
Janice Stadelman	Minerals, Reclamation & Compliance Specialist

Project Area Description:

A. Fire Description:

The Rodeo Creek Fire started by a lightning strike and was reported on August 8, 2001. The fire was declared controlled on August 11, 2001. The Rodeo Creek Fire burned a total of 5,529 acres, which encompasses 2,707 acres of public land administered by the BLM and 2,822 acres of private land in Eureka County, Nevada. The Boulder Flat and Twenty-five Allotments were affected by this fire. Approximately 650 acres of public land and 677 acres of private land were burned in the Boulder Flat Allotment. Approximately 2,057 acres of public land and 2,145 acres private land were burned in the Twenty-five Allotment. Burn severity on the majority of the fire

was light to moderate. No creeks were impacted by this fire. Approximately 0.25 miles of hand line was constructed. No structures burned in this fire.

B. Vegetation and Soil Description:

The burned area ranges in elevation from 4,800 feet to 5,972 feet above mean sea level (AMSL).

There are no perennial stream or spring riparian zones within the burned area. Plant communities at the lower elevations consisted primarily of Wyoming big sagebrush, Sandberg's bluegrass, Indian ricegrass, and Thurber's needlegrass. The slopes and higher elevations consisted primarily of Wyoming big sagebrush, antelope bitterbrush, Sandberg's bluegrass, and Great Basin wildrye. Cheatgrass is present near roads and on the uplands.

Low terraces have slopes ranging from 2-8 percent with elevations ranging from 4,800 feet to 5,200 feet AMSL. The soils are silt loams that are moderately deep and well drained. Permeability is moderate and runoff is moderate. Potential erosion from water and wind is moderate. Low mountain foothills slopes range from 50-75 percent with elevations ranging from 4,900 feet to 5,200 feet AMSL. Soils range from extremely stony fine sandy loam to rock outcrops with less than 10 percent soil material. The soils are very deep and well drained. Permeability is moderately slow and runoff is rapid. Potential erosion from water is high. Potential erosion from wind is slight. Dissected terraces, alluvial fans and upland escarpments have slopes ranging from 4-50 percent with elevations from 5,000 to 5,800 feet AMSL. Soils range from sandy loams to stony loams. These soils are deep and well drained. Permeability is slow to rapid and runoff is rapid. Potential erosion from water and wind is high. These soils are made up of Hydrologic Group C and Group D. The soils after the fire were not hydrophobic.

The range sites are: 25X19 Loamy 8-10" and 25X25 Chalky Knoll.

Proposed Project Treatments:

A. Revegetation:

1. Rangeland Aerial/Broadcast Seeding:

Boulder Flat Allotment: Approximately 492 acres of upland rangeland would be aerially seeded within the Rodeo Creek Fire perimeter. This aerial seeding would consist of overseeding the proposed drill seeding with forage kochia. When 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 winter range for mule deer and for pronghorn antelope. Seeding this area would reduce the potential for the invasion of non-native invasive weed species.

2. Rangeland Drill Seeding:

Boulder Flat Allotment: Approximately 492 acres of public land would be drill seeded with Siberian wheatgrass, Hycrest and Nordan crested wheatgrass, and Boizoisky Russian wildrye. The purpose of the seeding is to provide forage for livestock and wildlife, particularly winter range for mule deer and pronghorn antelope. Seeding this area would reduce the potential for the invasion of non-native invasive weed species.

3. Wildlife Aerial/Broadcast Seeding:

Approximately 835 acres would be aerially seeded within the Rodeo Creek Fire perimeter on the Twenty-five Allotment as follows:

Crucial Mule Deer Winter Range Emphasis: Every other swath within 1,274 acres, which equals 637 acres, would be seeded with Wyoming big sagebrush, basin big sagebrush, forage kochia and Western yarrow.

Lower Bench Forage Kochia Seeding: Every other swath within 108 acres, which equals 54 acres, would be seeded with forage kochia and rice hulls (seed carrier).

Sage Grouse Habitat Emphasis: 144 acres within selected ephemeral drainages, draws, and swales within Township 36 North, Range 48 Eat, section 36 would be seeded with Wyoming big sagebrush, basin big sagebrush and Western yarrow.

When 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 and cover for wildlife, particularly, for sage grouse nesting and summer/brood rearing habitat, and winter range for mule deer and pronghorn antelope. Seeding this area would reduce the potential for the invasion of non-native invasive weed species.

B. Structures:

1. Construct New Fence for Resource Protection:

Boulder Flat Allotment: Approximately 2.5 miles of new permanent fence would be constructed. This fence is needed to protect the burn and seeding treatment, which would allow for vegetation to re-establish.

Twenty-five Allotment: Approximately 2.7 miles of new fence would be constructed. This fence is needed to protect the burn and seeding treatment, which would allow for vegetation to re-establish.

2. Repair Existing Fence for Resource Protection:

Approximately 5.5 miles of the allotment boundary fence between the Boulder Flat and Twenty-five Allotments would be repaired and 3.7 miles would be reconstructed. The purpose of this fence repair and reconstruction is required in order to maintain the integrity of the allotment boundary fence and to provide for proper rangeland and livestock management.

C. Erosion Control Treatments:

1. Road Repair:

Approximately 4 miles of road was damaged by fire suppression activities on the Rodeo Creek Fire. The BLM Transportation Plan Maps designate this road or a portion of this road as BLM Road 1219. Road maintenance would require wetting and grading in order to re-establish the roadbed, re-establish drainage and to prevent widening of the existing road or the development and establishment of new roads or travel routes parallel to the existing road.

D. Site Preparation: None

E. Other:

1. Cultural Resource Inventory:

Cultural resource inventories would be conducted on approximately 5.2 miles of new fence construction, 492 acres of drill seeding, and 4 miles of road proposed for repair. The cultural resource inventories would be conducted prior to the implementation of the proposed rehabilitation efforts. Any cultural resources discovered during these inventories would be avoided. The purpose of inventoring the proposed new fence, drill seeding, and road repair is to prevent damage to any cultural resource sites that may be present.

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
- Non-native Invasive Weed Species
- 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:

Prior to the Rodeo Creek Fire, no cultural resource inventories had been completed within the burned area. A BLM archaeologist inventoried the 0.25 miles of hand line that was constructed during suppression. No cultural resource sites were found during this inventory. No cultural resources are known to have been impacted by this fire.

Archaeological sites and cultural properties in this area must be afforded protection whenever possible. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act mandates that the federal government would account for cultural resources in its projects and undertakings, including fire rehabilitation efforts. Ground disturbing activities such as fence construction and road repair could damage cultural sites. Therefore, areas designated for potential ground disturbance would be inventoried for cultural resources before the disturbance occurs in accordance with the State Protocol Agreement between the Nevada BLM 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 would generally have transect spacing of 100 meters. More intense inventory would be used for highly sensitive areas. When surface disturbance is greater than 10 cm, then 30 meter transect intervals would be used.

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

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. When 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 area provides habitat for golden eagles, burrowing owls, Swainson's hawks, and ferruginous hawks, which are State of Nevada Listed Species. The area also provides nesting and summer/brood-rearing habitat for sage grouse, a BLM Sensitive Species. Nevada BLM policy is to provide State of Nevada Listed and BLM Sensitive Species with the same level of protection as is provided for candidate species to prevent further listings as threatened or endangered. 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 the BLM and Nevada Division of Wildlife. The proposed seeding treatments and rest from grazing pressure are designed to help restore sagebrush habitat and/or reduce the impacts from the invasion or re-invasion of fire prone annual weeds. The artificial seeding of big sagebrush species and later successful establishment of these species from this effort would ensure that these species are on site as future seed sources, as well as cover and forage, in the event that natural sources were lost due to the fire and natural recovery is slow (See Migratory Bird Section below). Sage grouse would be able to more fully utilize the burn area with big sagebrush cover. Otherwise, many areas on the burn would likely be avoided until a semblance of shrubs naturally re-establish.

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, and horned lark.

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. Wyoming and basin big sagebrush vegetation types generally do not naturally respond well to block burn configurations, such as large areas observed on the burn, where only relatively small intact stands still exist. Basin big sagebrush seed banks

(viable residual seed dispersed last fall and winter) were likely lost as a result of the fire within the large blocks. Wyoming big sagebrush seed banks usually do not persist after the summer following seed dispersal in unburned areas, let alone burned areas. Recruitment would be slow from intact stands without rehabilitation. The proposed action to seed the area with three seed mixtures. Two of the seed mixtures include a native perennial forb species and two big sagebrush species. The third seed mixture would include a species (forage kochia) that helps to slow down or stop wildfires at lower elevations dominated by cheatgrass. These seed mixtures would help to provide wildlife cover and forage, and help compete with any potential site-specific establishment of exotic annual plant species. This 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. Wildlife:

The subject area provides mule deer intermediate range (October 15 - November 15 and March 15 - April 15 emphasis), crucial winter range (November 15 - March 15), and migration corridor to other winter range areas to the south. The availability of winter habitat is a critical limiting factor for the affected mule deer herd unit. The area also provides pronghorn antelope intermediate range, summer range, and crucial winter range. Overall, there are approximately 100 bird species, 70 mammal species and several reptile and amphibian species that can be found in sagebrush habitats on the allotments with many more additional species also found in the vicinity of riparian and meadow habitats on a seasonal or year-long basis. The area provides habitat for many of these species.

Wildlife was adversely impacted by the Rodeo Creek 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 the with three wildlife seed mixes to help restore critical forage and cover more quickly.

G. 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 infestations and cheatgrass invasion. Grazing closures would 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 allotments for grazing. The actual animal unit month (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.

H. Water Quality (surface/ground):

Watersheds that burned could be subject to increased flooding and erosion due to the lack of vegetative cover. Precipitation events would 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. There are no perennial streams within the burned area. The proposed seeding treatments and rest from grazing would minimize the potential of erosion and sediment loading to downstream creeks from runoff of large precipitation events, which would result in reduce future erosion impacts to burned watersheds by aiding in restoring vegetation.

I. Visual Resources:

The Rodeo Creek Fire is within Visual Resource Management (VRM) Classes IV. The Class IV VRM objective 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 viewers 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 hand lines, have resulted in visual impacts to the area. Changes in this class should be subordinate to the existing landscape. Revegetation efforts are designed to blend into the background without attracting undue attention and aid in restoring the area to a more characteristic landscape. Construction of new fence would create a new linear feature into the landscape but would meet the Class IV VRM objective.

J. Cumulative Impacts:

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

References:

United States Department of Agricultural. Natural Resource Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service). 1980. Soil Survey of Tuscarora Mountain Area, Nevada, Parts of Elko, Eureka, and Lander Counties.

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

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

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

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

**NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
DECISION RECORD
RODEO CREEK FIRE (X-272)
BLM/EK/PL-2001/072**

Finding of No Significant Impact:

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Supplemental Environmental Assessment BLM/EK/PL-2001/072, 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 Rodeo Creek Fire BLM/EK/PL-2001/072. The Rodeo Creek Fire burned a total of approximately 5,529 acres, which encompasses 2,707 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management, Elko Field Office, and 2,822 acres of private land in Eureka County, Nevada. Of the 5,529 acres of land that burned, approximately 650 acres of public land and 677 acres of private land were in the Boulder Flat Allotment, and 2,057 acres of public land and 2,145 acres of private land were in the Twenty-five Allotment.

Approximately 492 acres of public land will be drill seeded with Siberian wheatgrass, Hycrest and Nordan crested wheatgrass, Boizoisky Russian wildrye and aerially overseeded with forage kochia within the Boulder Flat Allotment. Approximately 835 acres of public land that burned within the Twenty-five Allotment will be aerially seeded using three seed mixtures to rehabilitate wildlife habitat.

Approximately 5.2 miles of new fence will be constructed. Approximately 9.2 miles of the allotment boundary fence between the Boulder Flat and Twenty-five Allotments will be repaired or reconstructed.

Approximately 4 miles of road will be repaired. Cultural resource inventories will be completed on approximately 492 acres of public land proposed for drill seeding, 5.2 miles of new fence, and 4 miles of road proposed for repair.

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. Post-fire grazing management, including the period of time needed for closure, will be determined based on the BLM and Permittee agreements, monitoring, and achievement of site specific resource

objectives.

Rationale:

Implementation of the proposed action described in the NFRP Supplement EA for the Rodeo Creek 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 (RMP) 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 Manager

Date