

**NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
AND DECISION RECORD  
ISOLATION FIRE (X-160)  
BLM/EK/PL2001/048**

**Finding of No Significant Impact:**

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Supplement Environmental Assessment BLM/EK/PL2000/048, 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 Isolation Fire BLM/PL2000/048. Approximately 12,042 acres of public rangeland managed by the Bureau of Land Management Elko Field Office and 1,990 acres of private land were burned during this fire. Approximately 525 acres of the burned public land will be rehabilitated by planting of a watershed multiple species seed mixture and 2 flood hazard warning signs will be installed in areas subject to flash flooding. Over 7 miles of dozer line will be rehabilitated. Over 7 miles of new fence will be constructed and 16 miles of existing fence will be repaired in order to establish grazing closures to rest rehabilitated areas. Approximately 23 miles of fence lines will be inventoried for cultural resources. Approximately 20 acres of Scotch thistle and 10 acres of hoary cress will be chemically treated and monitoring for future noxious weed invasion of the burned area 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 Isolation 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; will provide quality forage for livestock and wildlife; and will facilitate meeting established standards and guidelines for livestock grazing.

The Wells 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.

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Helen Hankins  
Elko Field Office

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Date

**NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
ISOLATION FIRE (X160)  
BLM/EK/PL-2001/048**

**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 (Construction and repair of fence to facilitate grazing closure), 2 ( Planting of multiple species seed mixtures), 4 (Construction of erosion and sediment control structures), 5 (Dozer line rehabilitation), 8 (Invasive, nonnative weed species control), and 10 (Cultural resource site stabilization and rehabilitation). 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.

**List of Preparers:**

Tom Warren	Emergency Stabilization Rehabilitation Manager
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**Project Area Description:**

A. Fire Description:

The fire was started by a lightning strike and was reported on July 3, 2001 and was declared out on July 7, 2001. It burned 12,042 acres of public land and 1,990 acres of private land. Four grazing allotments were affected: Deeth, Stormy, Pole Creek, and Devils Gate. Three of these allotments contain both private and public land and the percentage of the allotment burned varied from less than 1 % (Stormy) to 58% (Pole Creek). No structures burned in this fire, but approximately 3 miles of private fence burned around the Carlson Place. The majority of the dozer lines were constructed on mid elevation sites in the vicinity of structures, that is, west of Marys River Ranch, in the vicinity of Carlson Place, and north of the Itcaina Corrals. Burn severity was moderate to high in the Pole Creek and Hot Springs Creek drainages, particularly in

the channel bottoms where fire removed most of the vegetation. Burn severity on the majority of the fire was low and “green up” of perennial grass species and germination of new grass seedlings was visible after recent rains.

**B. Vegetation and Soil Description:**

The area ranges in elevation from about 6000 ft in the southern and eastern portions of the burned area to 7200 ft in the north to northwestern portions. Riparian zones occur along Pole Creek, one of its tributaries, and Hot Springs Creek. Several springs are located to the north of the Hot Springs Creek drainage. Vegetation in these drainages is dominated by willow, aspen, and sedges. Vegetation at lower elevation sites is composed predominately of sagebrush (low, big, and mountain sagebrush), bitterbrush, bluebunch wheatgrass, and Thurber’s needlegrass. At higher elevations Idaho fescue is found instead of Thurber’s needlegrass. Very little cheatgrass is found on the burn site.

Soils in the perennial drainages are deep and medium textured, and may, or may not, have coarse fragments. Active gully erosion and channel incision is occurring in the Pole Creek drainage and tributaries. Signs of old mud and debris flows were found on the slopes above the Hot Springs Creek drainages. Soils were tested in the field for hydrophobicity, and were determined not to be hydrophobic. Slopes above these drainages are steep, 15 to 50%, and runoff is rapid. Most of the upland soils are shallow over bedrock. Surface textures are very to extremely gravelly loams. Subsoils are generally very gravelly or cobbly clay loam or clay.

**Proposed Project Treatments:**

**A. Revegetation:**

**1. Watershed aerial seeding:**

Approximately 525 acres in the Pole Creek and Hot Springs Creek drainages would be seeded with Thickspike and Intermediate wheatgrass and Triticale. Seed would be aerially applied between late October through December. If possible, seed would be broadcast on snow to aid in germination and reduce seed consumption by rodents and birds.

**2. Invasive, Nonnative Weed Control:**

Approximately 20 acres of Scotch thistle and 10 acres of hoary cress would be chemically treated. If noxious weeds are detected after fire rehabilitation efforts are completed, appropriate Integrated Pest Management (IPM) control measures would be implemented to control the invasion.

**B. Structures:**

1. Fencing:

Approximately 7 miles of new fence would be constructed and 16 miles of existing allotment boundary and pasture fences would be repaired to allow closure of seeded and burned areas to grazing for a period to be determined by post-rehabilitation monitoring. The fences are needed to protect the proposed watershed seeding treatment and burned areas to allow for vegetation to reestablish.

White topped T-posts would be used in all new fence construction. The fences would be flagged using white ribbon for the first 2 years after construction. These measures would help reduce wildlife mortality associated with fence collisions.

C. Erosion Control Treatments

1. Dozer line rehabilitation:

Dozer lines were rehabilitated after the fire. Berms were pulled and spread back onto the line and dozer piles were spread. Approximately 7 miles of bulldozer-damaged areas would be aerial seeded with bluebunch wheatgrass to reduce erosion and encourage revegetation.

2. Flood Hazard Warning Signs:

Two flood hazard warning signs would be installed along dirt roads near the Hot Springs Creek drainages. Large peak flows, possibly accompanied with large amounts of cobble, could occur following intense rainstorms before vegetation has fully recovered to preburn conditions.

D. Site Preparation: None

E. Other:

1. Cultural resource inventories:

Cultural resource inventories would be conducted along the proposed 23 miles of fence lines. These inventories would identify any cultural resources that might need to be protected during rehabilitation treatments.

**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  
Wastes, hazardous/solid  
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 seedings and grazing closure would encourage regrowth of vegetation, thus reducing future potential air quality impacts.

B. Cultural Resources:

The Isolation 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 dozer line rehabilitation and fence construction 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 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 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 BLM and SHPO, or that have been fully mitigated, would be flagged for avoidance and avoided during rehabilitation activities. Flagging would be placed to minimize the potential for looting and vandalism and be removed as soon as possible.

C. Floodplains:

There are two major drainages in the Isolation Fire. Burn severity was moderate to high in the Pole Creek drainage, the major tributary, and in Hot Springs Creek, particularly in the channel bottoms where vegetation was thickest. Much of the riparian vegetation was removed by the fire. Future precipitation events could result in abnormally high flooding due to the lack of vegetation

along these streams and in the surrounding watersheds. In order to reduce the impacts of potential flooding events, the burned watersheds, including the streams, seeps and springs feeding into Pole Creek drainage, its major tributary, and Hot Springs Creek, should be rested from livestock grazing for a minimum of two years. Burned riparian areas should recover naturally in the absence of livestock grazing pressure. Grazing should not be reauthorized near burned streams until aspen suckers are at least 5-7 ft tall. In order to facilitate this riparian and watershed rehabilitation, the proposed fence repair and construction would serve to eliminate cattle grazing in these watersheds during the required rest period. In addition, seeding of upland acreage would enhance revegetation of these watersheds, and aid in reducing future flood events as well.

#### D. Invasive, Nonnative Species:

Hoary cress, Canada thistle, and Scotch thistle can be found on public and private land on the north, south, and west areas of the Isolation Burn. The proposed rehabilitation treatments would include herbicide treatment of 20 acres of Scotch thistle and 10 acres of hoary cress. Fire suppression efforts, including dozer line construction and use of engines and other mechanized vehicles, is likely to have introduced hoary cress or other noxious weed species seeds further into the burned area. In order to reduce the potential impacts of a future invasion of noxious weeds, monitoring should be conducted after rehabilitation treatments are completed. If noxious weeds are discovered to have further invaded the burn area, herbicide treatments would need to be implemented to reduce the spread of the noxious weeds. The proposed monitoring and noxious weed treatment would help to prevent or reduce any such noxious weed invasions of the Isolation burn area.

#### E. Native American Religious Concerns:

Native Americans would be consulted as appropriate prior to any ground disturbing activities or use of herbicides. 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 would insure that measures are taken to avoid or reduce impacts to these areas of concern to Native Americans.

#### F. Threatened, Endangered, Candidate, or Sensitive Species:

No threatened or endangered plant species are known to occur in the burn area. An historic golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) nest is located just outside the burn to the northeast. 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 reinvasion of fire-prone annual weeds.

There is one location within the Isolation Fire known to be inhabited by the Humboldt spring snail (*Pyrgulopsis humboldtensis*). This location is on private land (T39N R59E Sec.5, NE1/4 SW1/4 SE1/4 NW1/4). Spring snails currently have no legal status except as “species of concern,” however, BLM is working with several other agencies under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) concerning the conservation of spring snails in the Great Basin. Under this MOU, the responsibilities of the BLM are to develop and implement strategies for the conservation of spring snails and their habitats, including Conservation Agreements with other agencies and interested parties. The proposed seeding treatments should help stabilize soils in the watershed occupied by the spring snails, and thus improve water quality over time in affected streams.

A known location for Columbia spotted frog (*Rana luteiventris*), a candidate species, is approximately 1.75 miles NE of the fire boundary. No other sensitive or candidate species are known to occur in the vicinity of the fire.

#### G. Visual Resources:

The burned area is within Visual Resource Management Class IV 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. Construction of new fence would create a new linear feature into the landscape but would meet Class IV requirements.

#### H. Water Quality, surface/ground:

Pole Creek and Hot Springs Creek are both tributaries of Marys River. Marys River is a Nevada Class B stream with numeric water quality standards that must be met. The proposed seeding and rest from grazing would minimize the chance of large runoff events on the steep burned watersheds from carrying large sediment loads downstream to Marys River.

#### I. Wetlands/Riparian Zones:

Wetlands associated with riparian areas in the burned watersheds were impacted by the Isolation Fire through loss of vegetation. Willows, aspen and perennial shrubs along streams should resprout naturally if grazing is prevented during the sensitive early growth stages. The proposed fencing and rest from grazing would enable these riparian species to regrow faster and return the riparian wetlands to a proper functioning condition.

#### J. Wildlife:

Approximately 1400 acres of antelope and deer summer range was impacted by the fire and subsequent cat lines constructed for containment. Wildlife was adversely impacted by the Isolation 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 watersheds. This would benefit wildlife by helping to restore critical forage and cover more quickly.

#### K. 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 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 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.

#### L. 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.

**Project Cost Summary:** (the cost summary information can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the Elko 14 Fire Complex)

**Project Maps:** (project maps can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation

(BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the Elko 14 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 14 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 14 Fire Complex)