

**NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
DECISION RECORD
WEST BULLION FIRE (X-185)
BLM/EK/PL2001/051**

Finding of No Significant Impact:

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Supplement Environmental Assessment BLM/EK/PL2001/051, 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 West Bullion Fire BLM/PL2001/051. Over 336 acres of public land managed by the Bureau of Land Management Elko Field Office were burned in this fire. Approximately 185 acres of the burned public land will be rehabilitated by planting of multiple species seed mixtures. Approximately 2 miles of dozer line will be rehabilitated. Approximately 1.5 miles of new fence will be constructed and 1.5 miles of fence will be repaired to facilitate grazing closures. The dozer and fence lines will be inventoried for cultural resources before treatments begin. Monitoring for noxious weed invasion in the burned and disturbed areas will be conducted and treatments will be applied if weeds are detected. 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 West Bullion 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
WEST BULLION FIRE (X-185)
BLM/EK/PL-2001/051**

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), 5 (Dozer line rehabilitation), 8 (Invasive, nonnative weed control), 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 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 July 5, 2001. It burned over 336 acres of public land. Three grazing allotments were affected: the Bullion Road Allotment, the Four Mile Canyon Allotment, and the Ten Mile Allotment. The fire impacted 2% of the Bullion Road Allotment, 1% of the Four Mile Canyon Allotment, and less than one percent of the Ten Mile Allotment. No structures were burned by the fire.

B. Vegetation and Soil Description:

The burned area ranges in elevation from 5,400 ft to 6,000 ft. Vegetation in the burn was comprised of low sage, Douglas rabbitbrush, Sandburg's bluegrass, big sagebrush, black sagebrush, Utah juniper, Thurber's needlegrass, and cheatgrass.

Soils within the burned area occur on sideslopes of hills on 15 to 30% slopes. They are shallow to moderately deep and have very cobbly or gravelly loam surfaces. The subsoil is very gravelly

or cobbly clay. Permeability is slow to very slow and runoff is rapid. The wind and water erosion hazard is slight because of the surface armor of gravel and cobble.

Most of the vegetation was consumed by fire, and there is a small threat to the homes, nearly 2 miles down below, from mud or debris flows following an intense rainstorm. The proposed seeding would reduce this risk of property damage downstream.

Proposed Project Treatments:

A. Revegetation:

1. Wildlife and rangeland aerial seeding:

Approximately 185 acres would be aerial seeded with a mixture of bluebunch wheatgrass, Indian ricegrass, thickspike wheatgrass, forage kochia, alfalfa, Western yarrow, and burnet. The purpose of the seeding is to provide forage for livestock and wildlife, provide for a small fuels break, and to reduce the potential for the invasion of invasive, nonnative weed species.

B. Structures:

1. Construct new fence for resource protection:

Approximately 1.5 miles of temporary fence would be constructed to allow closure of seeded areas to grazing for a period to be determined by post-rehabilitation monitoring. This fence is needed to protect the proposed seeding treatments and to allow for vegetation to become reestablished.

2. Repair existing fence for resource protection:

Approximately 1.5 miles of existing fence would be repaired to allow closure of seeded areas to grazing for a period to be determined by post-rehabilitation monitoring. This fence is needed to protect the proposed seeding treatments and to allow for vegetation to become reestablished.

C. Erosion Control Treatments:

1. Dozer line rehabilitation:

Approximately 2 miles of dozer line would be rehabilitated by pushing back berms, regrading disturbed areas, and drill or aerial seeded with Nordan crested wheatgrass and Siberian wheatgrass to reduce erosion and encourage revegetation.

D. Site Preparation: None

E Other:

1. Cultural resource inventories:

Cultural resource inventories would be conducted along the approximately 2 miles of dozer lines and the proposed new 3 miles of new fence. 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
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 seedings and grazing closure would encourage regrowth of vegetation, thus reducing future potential air quality impacts.

B. Cultural Resources:

The West Bullion 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 would account for cultural resources in its projects and undertakings, including fire rehabilitation efforts. Ground disturbing activities such as drilling, dozer line rehabilitation, and fence construction could damage cultural sites. Therefore, areas designated for mechanized seeding and other 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 would generally have transect spacing of 100 meters. More intense inventory would be used for highly sensitive areas. If 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 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 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 West Bullion Fire area.

D. Native American Religious Concerns:

Native Americans will be consulted as appropriate prior to any ground disturbing activities such as drill seeding and prior to any herbicide treatment. 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.

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

The area provides habitat for golden eagle and ferruginous hawks which are State of Nevada Listed Species. Sage grouse, a BLM Sensitive Species, potentially inhabit the area since it provides suitable habitat. There are two sage grouse leks that have been documented approximately four to five miles northeast of the burn. 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. The proposed seeding treatment 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 and would therefore potentially benefit sage grouse. The proposed action would not likely affect any other BLM Special Status Species of plants or animals.

F. 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-dependent 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 seed the area with perennial grasses, forbs, and forage kochia would help compete with the establishment of exotic annual plant species. This would in turn help to allow natural recovery of native shrub species that provide cover and species-specific forage. 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.

G. Visual Resources:

The proposed project treatment area is within Visual Resource Management Class III 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. Reseeding the fire area and dozer lines would serve to reduce the visual impacts in the area. Construction of new fence would create a new linear feature into the landscape but would meet Class III requirements.

H. Wildlife:

The subject area provides crucial mule deer winter range. The availability of winter habitat is a critical limiting factor for the affected mule deer herd unit. Pronghorn antelope populations have steadily increased in the area since 1993 with recent sightings within approximately one mile east of the burn. This has occurred largely as a result of animals that crossed Interstate 80, the Humboldt River, and other barriers during the severe winter of 1992-93 and stayed in the area. It is unknown if pronghorn have inhabited the burn area perimeter prior to the fire or will inhabit it as a result of the fire. There are approximately 100 bird species and 70 mammal species that can be found in sagebrush habitats. The area provides habitat for many of these species.

Wildlife was adversely impacted by the West Bullion 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 it with a seed mixture conducive to wildlife use. The proposed seeding would help provide forage diversity for mule deer and other wildlife species. The successful seeding of perennial plant species would help to compete with the establishment of exotic annual plant species. This would, in turn, help to allow natural recovery of native shrub species that provide additional critical wildlife 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.

J. Water Quality, surface/ground:

There are no perennial streams within the burned area. The few ephemeral drainages within the burn flow north a few miles to the Humboldt River. The Humboldt River is an impaired water due to high levels of turbidity, total phosphorus and iron.

High runoff volumes, and associated sediment, following a large precipitation event in the burned area, would have little impact on water quality or on the discharge of the Humboldt River. The burned area is small relative to the size of the Humboldt River Basin. Higher than normal runoff coming down the ephemeral drainage in Sections 8, 6, and 31 could pose a risk to the scattered homes below. The proposed seeding would allow the burned area to recover more quickly and would reduce the threat of property damage downstream.

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.)