

**NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
AND  
DECISION RECORD  
DOUBLE MOUNTAIN FIRE (X-162)  
BLM/EK/PL2001/053**

**Finding of No Significant Impact:**

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Supplement Environmental Assessment BLM/EK/PL2001/053, 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 Double Mountain Fire BLM/PL2000/053. Approximately 3,351 acres of public rangeland managed by the Bureau of Land Management Elko Field Office, and 45 acres of private land were burned during this fire. Approximately 845 acres of the burned public land will be rehabilitated by planting of multiple species seed mixtures. Approximately 40 acres of aspen will be fenced for regeneration. Approximately 3 miles of new fence would be constructed and 2 miles of fence will be repaired. Over 16 miles of suppression-damaged road will be repaired and 2 culverts and cattleguards will be installed. Approximately 23 miles of road repair areas and fence lines will be inventoried for cultural resources. Over 5 acres of existing Canada thistle, Scotch thistle, and hoary cress infestation will be treated with herbicides. Monitoring for noxious weed invasion in the burned and disturbed areas will be conducted after treatment and additional treatments will be applied if weeds are detected again. 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 Double Mountain Fire will reduce the amount of soil loss and potential for gully erosion in the drainages that burned hot in the fire; reduce the sediment load entering the West Fork of Beaver Creek approximately one mile downstream; 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.

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Helen Hankins  
Elko Field Office

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Date

**NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
DOUBLE MOUNTAIN FIRE (X-162)  
BLM/EK/PL2001/053**

**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), 6 (Road repair), 8 (Invasive, nonnative weed 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 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 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2001 and was declared controlled on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2001. It burned over 3,351 acres of public land and 45 acres of private land in Nevada. The Beaver Creek Allotment was affected by the fire. The fire impacted 4.5% of the Beaver Creek Allotment. No structures were burned.

B. Vegetation and Soil Description:

The burned area ranges in elevation from 6,100 ft to 7,200 ft. At lower elevations the vegetation was comprised of Wyoming big sage with an understory of Thurber's needlegrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, and *Poa* spp. The uplands were comprised of mountain big sage, Basin big sage, low

sage, bluebunch wheatgrass, Sandberg bluegrass, and thickspike wheatgrass. At higher elevations the dominant shrubs were bitterbrush and serviceberry with a dominant understory of bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue. Small portions of Jake's Creek, the West Fork of Beaver Creek, and 2 aspen stands were also affected by the fire. About 1/8 of a mile of Jakes Creek was burned and a water drafting site for fire engines on the West Fork of Beaver Creek was affected. Three aspen stands completely burned in the upper elevations. Riparian species included willow, sedges, rushes, and grasses.

Soils on the side slopes of Double Mountain are moderately deep to deep over bedrock. They are located on 15 to 30% slopes and have rapid runoff. Soil textures range from loams to clays with a large percentage of gravel and cobble. Erosion hazard by water is slight to moderate when the soils are disturbed. Wind erosion hazard is slight because of a large amount of surface gravel and cobble. Soils along the drainage ways, such as those proposed for seeding, are deep and medium textured. These soils lack the gravel and cobble surface protection that the soils on the side slopes have, and thus are more susceptible to wind and water erosion after the vegetation has burned than the soils on the side slopes. Several rain events that occurred following the fire caused noticeable erosion in the burned area.

**Proposed Project Treatments:**

A. Revegetation:

1. Watershed aerial seeding:

Approximately 165 acres in the low elevation drainages would be aurally seeded with thickspike wheatgrass, Western yarrow, streambank wheatgrass, and small burnet. 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 stabilize watershed slopes and provide forage for livestock and wildlife, particularly critical winter range forage for antelope, mule deer, and sage grouse and to reduce the potential for the invasion of invasive, nonnative weed species.

2. Wildlife aerial seeding:

Approximately 680 acres of upland areas that provide mule deer range and sage grouse winter and summer/early brood-rearing habitat would be aurally seeded with Wyoming big sagebrush, Basin big sagebrush, Western yarrow, and small burnet. 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 antelope, mule deer, and sage grouse, and to reduce the potential for the invasion of invasive, nonnative weed species.

3. Invasive, Nonnative Weed Control:

Herbicides would be used to control approximately 5 acres of an existing Canada thistle, Scotch

thistle, and hoary cress infestation. By treating prior to seed set and maturation, the spread of these noxious weeds within the burned area could be controlled. Long term monitoring (3 years) of existing weed locations would be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the proposed treatment.

**B. Structures:**

1. Fencing:

Approximately 2.1 miles of protective fence would be repaired and 2 miles of gap fence would be constructed to allow closure of burned areas to grazing for a period to be determined by post-rehabilitation monitoring. Two exclosures (approximately one mile of fence) consisting of approximately 40 acres would be constructed in order to protect aspen stands. These fences are needed to protect the proposed seeding treatments and to allow for vegetation to become reestablished.

**C. Erosion Control Treatments:**

1. Road repair:

Approximately 12 miles of suppression-damaged roads would be regraded and 6 miles would be graveled. Two cattleguards would be repaired and two culverts would be installed on Double Mountain and Beaver Creek Roads.

**D. Site Preparation: None**

**E. Other:**

1. Cultural resource inventories:

Cultural resource inventories would be conducted along the approximately 5 miles of proposed fence lines and 18 miles of roads. 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 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 road repair treatments would encourage regrowth of vegetation, thus reducing future potential air quality impacts.

B. Cultural Resources:

The Double Mountain 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 road repair 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 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 be removed as soon as possible.

C. Invasive, Nonnative Species:

Fire suppression efforts, including use of engines and other mechanized vehicles, is likely to have introduced cheatgrass and noxious weed species seeds into the burned area. Approximately 5 acres of Canada thistle, Scotch thistle, and hoary cress were present in the burn area and may have been further introduced into the burned area. In order to reduce the potential impacts of an invasion of noxious weeds, the existing 5 acres would be treated with herbicide and monitoring

would be conducted after rehabilitation treatments are completed. If noxious weeds are discovered to have invaded the burn area, herbicide treatments would be needed again to reduce the spread of the noxious weeds. Monitoring and noxious weed treatment would help to prevent or reduce noxious weed impacts in the Double Mountain Fire area.

D. Native American Religious Concerns:

Native Americans would be consulted as appropriate prior to any ground disturbing activities 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, burrowing owls, Swainson's hawks and ferruginous hawks, which are State of Nevada Listed Species. The area also provides winter 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. The proposed action would not likely affect any other BLM Special Status Species of plants or animals. 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 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 seeding of big sagebrush species would help ensure that these species are on site as future seed sources, and provide cover and forage, in the event that natural sources were lost due to the fire and natural recovery is slow. 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 reestablish. The West Fork of Beaver Creek is a high priority potential recovery stream for the Lahontan cutthroat trout (LCT) and identified as potential reintroduction site for LCT in the 1995 Fish and Wildlife Service LCT Recovery Plan.

F. Visual Resources:

The burned area is within Visual Resource Management Classes III and changes in this class should be subordinate to the existing landscape. The fire itself has 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 III requirements.

#### G. Wildlife:

The subject area provides mule deer winter range. Use also occurs during the fall/spring and summer period. The availability of winter habitat is a critical limiting factor for the affected mule deer herd unit. The area also provides pronghorn summer 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 allotment. The area provides habitat for many of these species. Wildlife was adversely impacted by the Double Mountain 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 area with a seed mix that would help to restore critical forage and cover more quickly.

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

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

The burned area would be at greater risk for downstream flooding, particularly along the West Fork of Beaver Creek. Large runoff events would cause increased erosion and may result in degraded water quality in receiving waters such as Jakes Creek and West Fork of Beaver Creek. Increased sediment into these streams could negatively impact aquatic species such as fish. The proposed seeding treatments and rest from grazing would reduce future erosion impacts to burned watersheds by aiding in restoring vegetation.

#### J. Wetlands/Riparian Zones:

Wetlands associated with Jakes Creek and the West Fork of Beaver Creek were impacted by the Double Mountain 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. The proposed wildlife seeding would allow for faster revegetation of riparian areas and stabilize soils while slower growing natives recolonize the area.

#### K. Floodplains

There are no floodplains in the burned area. However, the West Fork of Beaver Creek has a narrow floodplain for most of its length. The proposed seeding treatments, by minimizing erosion and sedimentation, and by encouraging prompt revegetation of riparian areas of Jakes Creek and the West Fork of Beaver Creek, would also serve to reduce future impacts from flooding.

#### L. Forestry:

The Double Mountain Fire burned two relic stands of aspen. Due to declines in mature aspen/cottonwood throughout the district, regeneration of these stands is important to maintain current ecosystem structure. The proposed fencing enclosure of 40 acres of aspen and monitoring of this stand would increase the potential success of this regeneration.

#### M. 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.

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 two seed mixes that include perennial grasses, forbs and two big sagebrush species would help to provide wildlife cover and forage and 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.

**Project Cost Summary:** (the cost summary information can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan 2001 and Accomplishment Report for the Elko 14 Fire Complex.)

**Project Maps:** (project maps can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan 2001 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 2001 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 2001 and Accomplishment Report for the Elko 14 Fire Complex.)