

**NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND DECISION RECORD
MUD SPRINGS FIRE (X-228)
BLM/EK/PL2001/056**

Finding of No Significant Impact:

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Supplement Environmental Assessment BLM/EK/PL2000/056, 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 Mud Springs Fire BLM/PL2000/056. Approximately 546 acres of public rangeland managed by the Bureau of Land Management Elko Field Office were burned during this fire. Approximately 273 acres of the burned public land will be rehabilitated by aerially seeding Wyoming big sagebrush and Western yarrow. 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, if any, 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 Mud Springs Fire will protect soils in the burned area, including preventing potential loss of soil due to wind and water erosion; will provide quality forage for 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 Office

Date

**NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
MUD SPRINGS FIRE (X-228)
BLM/EK/PL-2001/056**

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 # 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 July 27, 1999.

List of Preparers:

Tom Warren	Emergency Stabilization Rehabilitation Manager
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Carol Marchio	Hydrologist
Donna Nyrehn	Rangeland Management Specialist
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Eric Dillingham	Archaeologist
Dan Kohring	Natural Resource Specialist (Noxious Weeds)

Project Area Description:

A. Fire Description:

The fire was started by a lightning strike and was reported on July 20, 2001 and was declared out on July 21, 2001. It burned 546 acres of public land. One grazing allotment was affected: the 25 Allotment. This fire affected only a very small percentage of this allotment. No structures burned in this fire, and no fence burned. Burn severity was moderate.

B. Vegetation and Soil Description:

The burned area ranges in elevation from 6,092 feet to 5,660 feet. Soils are composed of very gravelly loams and gravelly loams. Predominant range sites are Eroded Claypan 12-16", Claypan 12-16", and Loamy Slope 12-16".

Vegetation in the burned area is composed predominately of low sagebrush, bitterbrush, big sagebrush, Douglas rabbitbrush, Idaho fescue, bluebunch wheatgrass, and perennial forbs.

Proposed Project Treatments:

A. Revegetation:

1. Wildlife Seeding

Approximately 273 acres would be aerially seeded within 546 acres (every other swath) with Wyoming big sagebrush and Western yarrow. This area is critical mule deer winter range and summer pronghorn antelope range. Seeding with big sagebrush and yarrow would help improve the forage value for wintering deer in the area.

2. Invasive, Nonnative Weed Control:

If noxious weeds are detected during and after fire rehabilitation efforts, appropriate Integrated Pest Management (IPM) control measures would be implemented to control the invasion.

B. Structures: None

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
- Cultural Resources
- Environmental Justice
- Farmlands, prime or unique
- Floodplains
- Wastes, hazardous/solid
- Wetlands/Riparian zones
- Water Quality, surface/ground
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Wilderness

Critical elements and resources brought forward for analysis:

A. Air Quality:

The burned area is 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 seeding would encourage regrowth of vegetation, thus reducing future potential air quality impacts.

B. Invasive, Nonnative Species:

Fire suppression efforts, including use of engines and other mechanized vehicles, could 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, 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 invasion of the Mud Springs burn area.

C. Native American Religious Concerns:

Native Americans would be consulted as appropriate prior to any ground disturbing activities or chemical weed 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.

D. Visual Resources:

The burned area is within Visual Resource Management Class IV and the level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. The Mud Springs Fire has resulted in minor visual impact to the area. Revegetation by aerially seeding of a native shrub and forb is designed to blend into the background without attracting undue attention and aid in restoring the area to a more characteristic landscape.

E. Wildlife:

Approximately 546 acres of critical mule deer winter range was impacted by the fire. 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 Mud Springs Fire primarily through temporary loss of habitat through removal of vegetation by the fire. The proposed

rehabilitation treatment of seeding critical mule deer winter range would benefit wildlife by helping to restore critical forage and cover more quickly.

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.

Maintaining complete, diverse sagebrush communities is integral to conservation efforts for these species. Low to mid elevation sagebrush sites, such as the project area, are vulnerable to conversion to cheatgrass types following wildfire. The Wyoming big sagebrush vegetation type generally does not naturally respond well to block burn configurations, such as the burn on the area, where only relatively small intact stands still exist. Wyoming big sagebrush seed banks (viable residual seed on the ground) usually do not persist after the summer following seed dispersal in unburned areas, let alone burned areas. Recruitment would be slow from intact stands and surrounding unburned stands without rehabilitation. The proposed action to seed the area with Wyoming big sagebrush and western yarrow would help to provide wildlife cover and forage. In addition, seeding western yarrow would also help slow the establishment of cheatgrass within the burn area. 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. Threatened, Endangered, Candidate, or Sensitive Species:

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. 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 treatment 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 Wyoming big sagebrush would help ensure that it is on site as a future seed source, to provide cover and forage, in the event that 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.

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)