

**NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
DECISION RECORD
LINKA FIRE, X014
BLM/EK/PL2000/043**

Finding of No Significant Impact:

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Supplement Environmental Assessment BLM/EK/PL2000/043, 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 Linka Fire BLM/PL2000/043. Over 3300 acres of public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management Elko Field Office were burned during this fire. Approximately 425 acres will be rehabilitated by planting of multiple species seed mixtures and 12.2 miles of roads will be repaired. Approximately 1.0 mile of existing fence will be repaired in order to establish grazing closures to rest rehabilitated areas. 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 Linka Fire will protect soils within the burned area and on roads damaged by suppression activities. This includes preventing potential loss of soil due to wind and water erosion, reducing potential invasion and establishment of noxious weeds and cheatgrass, providing quality forage for livestock and wildlife, and 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
LINKA FIRE (X014)
BLM/EK/PL-2000-043**

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), 6 (Road repair), 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 7/27/99.

List of Preparers:

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Project Area Description:

A. Fire Description:

The fire was started by a lightning strike, was reported on July 10, 2000, and was declared controlled on July 12, 2000. It burned 3382 acres of public land on the east side of the Cortez Mountains between Sheep Creek Ranch and Cottonwood Canyon. Only one grazing allotment was affected, the South Buckhorn Allotment, but less than 1% of the allotment acreage burned. The Indian Ranch homestead, consisting of a small log cabin and a horse corral, was burned in the Linka Fire. Approximately 12.25 miles of road were damaged during fire suppression efforts. The fire burned the hottest along near Indian Ranch in the lower part of the Doc Creek drainage

B. Vegetation and Soil Description:

The burned area ranges in elevation from approximately 5500 ft to 7000 ft. There are no

perennial streams in the Linka Fire area, but the fire did burn both the Doc Creek and Linka Creek drainages, which are described as sagebrush draws. Soils are mostly shallow to moderately deep with medium to rapid runoff. Vegetation at the site is a sagebrush/bunchgrass complex with a significant understory of cheatgrass. The fire burned most of the big sage within the burn, but left several islands of low sage on the ridge tops and side slopes.

Proposed Project Treatments:

A. Revegetation:

1. Rangeland aerial seeding:

Approximately 244 acres near the Indian Ranch not conducive to drill seeding will be aerially seeded using forage kochia, Western Yarrow, Vavilov Siberian wheatgrass, and Nordan crested wheatgrass. (See attached specification sheets for seed and seeding rates per acre for this and the following seeding treatments). 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. Rangeland drill seeding:

Approximately 181 acres of burned area near the Indian Ranch will be drill seeded with Nordan crested wheatgrass and Siberian crested wheatgrass using standard drill seeding techniques. This rangeland seeding will reduce erosion and encourage revegetation. The purpose of both seedings is to provide forage for livestock and wildlife and reduce the potential for the invasion of invasive, nonnative weed species.

3. Monitoring to detect noxious weed invasion of burned areas:

If noxious weeds are detected in the burned area during and after fire rehabilitation efforts, appropriate Integrated Pest Management (IPM) control measures will be implemented to control the invasion. In particular, any disturbed roads and adjacent areas will be targeted for this noxious weed monitoring and subsequent treatment if weeds are detected.

B. Structures: None

C. Erosion Control Treatments

1. Road repair:

Approximately 12.25 miles of suppression-damaged roads will be regraded after adequate soil moisture is present to reduce erosion and widening by travelers trying to get around damaged areas.

D. Site Preparation: 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
- Environmental Justice
- Farmlands, prime or unique
- Floodplains
- Wastes, hazardous/solid
- Water Quality, surface/ground
- Wetlands/Riparian Areas
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Wild Horses
- Wilderness

Critical elements and resources brought forward for analysis:

A. Air Quality:

The burned areas and damaged roads in or near the burned area are 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 vegetation and erosion control treatments will encourage regrowth of vegetation, thus reducing future potential air quality impacts.

B. Cultural Resources:

The Linka 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 discing, drilling, dozer line rehabilitation, fence construction, and road repair could damage cultural sites. Therefore, areas designated for mechanized seeding and other ground disturbance will 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 will be plotted on maps and at a minimum will 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, will be flagged for avoidance and avoided during rehabilitation activities. Flagging will be placed to minimize the potential for looting and vandalism and removed as soon as possible.

The Indian Ranch structures which burned in the fire may be historically significant. Cultural surveys of this site will be conducted prior to rehabilitation efforts in this area.

C. Invasive, Nonnative Species:

Noxious weeds, including diffuse knapweed, Russian knapweed, and hoary cress may be located in areas near the burn. Fire suppression efforts, including dozer line construction and use of engines and other mechanized vehicles, is likely to have introduced this noxious weed species 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. The proposed monitoring and noxious weed treatment would help to prevent or reduce any such noxious weed invasion of the Linka Fire burn area.

D. Native American Religious Concerns:

Native Americans will be consulted as appropriate prior to any ground disturbing activities such as discing and drilling. 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 will 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:

No threatened or endangered plant species are known to occur in the burn area. 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 are designed to reduce the impacts from the invasion or re-invasion of fire prone annual weeds.

F. Visual Resources:

The burned area is within Visual Resource Management Class 3. 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. The proposed seeding of burned areas would reduce existing visual impacts.

G. Wildlife:

Wildlife could be adversely impacted by the Linka Fire, primarily through temporary loss of habitat through removal of vegetation. The proposed rehabilitation treatments include seeding with seed mixtures conducive to wildlife use. The aerial and drill seeding of lower elevation areas will help establish grass species that would out compete exotic invading plant species, as well as provide critical forage and cover.

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 will be identified to reduce impacts to ranchers where possible.

Project Cost Summary: (the cost summary information can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the Elko 13 Fire Complex)

Project Maps: (project maps can be found in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) Plan and Accomplishment Report for the Elko 13 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 13 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 13 Fire Complex)