NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
HOT LAKE FIRE (X-305)
BLM/EK/PL-2001/068

Introduction:

This Supplemental Environmental Assessment (EA) tiers to the Elko Field Office FY 2000 Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Environmental Assessment (NFRPEA) BLM/EK/PL-2000/037. The Proposed Action includes the following NFRPEA Treatments: 1 (Construction and Repair of Fences to Facilitate Grazing Closure), 2 (Planting of Multiple Species Seed Mixtures), 5 (Dozer Line Rehabilitation), 6 (Road Repair), 8 (Non-native Invasive Weed Species 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 July 27, 1999, and is consistent with the draft Interagency Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Handbook, Version 1.0, dated June 14, 2001.

List of Preparers:

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Project Area Description:

A. Fire Description:

The fire started by a lightning strike and was reported on August 12, 2001. The fire was declared controlled on August 18, 2001. The Hot Lake Fire burned a total of 70,910 acres, which encompass 68,332 acres of public land administered by the BLM and 2,578 acres of private land in Elko County, Nevada. Two grazing allotments were affected by the fire, Squaw Valley Allotment and Twenty-five Allotment. The fire affected 39,615 acres of public land and 271 acres of private land within the Squaw Valley Allotment, and 28,717 acres of public land and

2,307 acres of private land within the Twenty-five Allotment. Four abandoned trailers burned. Burn severity on the majority of the fire was low. The fire burned 5 miles of Rock Creek.

B. Vegetation and Soil Description:

The burned area ranges in elevation from 5,100 feet to 7,500 feet above mean sea level (AMSL). The dominant vegetation within the burned area consisted of Idaho fescue, bluebunch wheatgrass, Sandberg's bluegrass, bottlebrush squirreltail, Great Basin wildrye, Thurber's needlegrass, cheatgrass, low sagebrush, mountain big sagebrush, Wyoming big sagebrush, and antelope bitterbrush. Riparian species included a mixture of sedges, rushes, grasses, forbs and scattered willows.

Soils on steep hill and mountain side slopes (15-50 percent slopes) are generally shallow (<20") to moderately deep (20-40") over bedrock. Surface textures are predominantly loams, and subsoils range from clay loam to clay, usually with high gravel and cobble contents. Runoff is rapid and permeability is slow. The water erosion hazard is moderate to high and the wind erosion hazard is slight when the soils are disturbed.

Soils on less than 15 percent slopes range from shallow to deep over bedrock or a hardpan. These soils have less gravel and cobble throughout the soil profile than the soils on steeper slopes. Textures include loams, silt loams and clays, with or without, coarse fragments. Runoff is generally medium and the water erosion hazard is slight to moderate. The wind erosion hazard is slight.

Soils most susceptible to water erosion are those on steep slopes with moderate to high burn severity. Soils most susceptible to wind erosion are those with little surface gravel and cobble that also have moderate to high burn severity. The proposed seedings would reduce the risk of accelerated wind and water erosion.

The range sites are: 25X09 South Slope 12-14", 25X12 Loamy Slope 12-16", 25X14 Loamy 10-12" (deep and well drained), 25X15 South Slope 8-12", 25X17 Clay Pan 12-16", 25X18 Claypan 10-12", and 25X19 Loamy 8-10".

Proposed Project Treatments:

A. Revegetation:

1. Rangeland Aerial/Broadcast Seeding:

Twenty-five Allotment: Approximately 2,219 acres of upland rangelands would be aerially reseeded with Siberian wheatgrass, Nordan and Hycrest crested wheatgrass, Boizoisky Russian wildrye, and forage kochia. When possible, seed would be broadcast on snow to aid in germination and reduce seed consumption by rodents and birds. Seeding this area would reduce

the potential for the invasion of non-native invasive weed species, particularly cheatgrass which invaded this site following the Clementine Fire in the mid-1980's.

2. Wildlife Aerial/Broadcast Seeding:

Squaw Valley Allotment: Approximately 10,245 acres would be aerially seeded as follows:

Crucial Mule Deer Intermediate/Winter Range Emphasis: Every other swath within17,478 acres which equals 8,739 acres would be seeded. Seed mixture would include Wyoming big sagebrush, basin big sagebrush, forage kochia and Western yarrow.

Sage Grouse Habitat Emphasis: 1,506 acres within selected ephemeral drainages, draws, and swales throughout the burned area west of Ivanhoe Creek and North Antelope Creek would be seeded with Wyoming big sagebrush, basin big sagebrush, and Western yarrow. This seeding would occur in the vicinity of several sage grouse leks.

When 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 intermediate and crucial winter range for mule deer and intermediate and summer range for pronghorn antelope. This seeding would also provide nesting, summer/early brood-rearing, and winter habitat for sage grouse. Seeding this area would reduce the potential for the invasion of non-native invasive weed species.

Twenty-five Allotment: Approximately 2,558 acres would be aerially seeded as follows:

Crucial Mule Deer Intermediate/Winter Range Emphasis: Every other swath within 2,206 acres which equals1,103 acres would be seeded. Seed mixture would include Wyoming big sagebrush, basin big sagebrush, forage kochia and Western yarrow.

Sage Grouse Habitat Emphasis: 1,455 acres within selected ephemeral drainages, draws, and swales throughout the burned area in the vicinity of the North Sixmile sage grouse lek would be seeded with Wyoming big sagebrush, basin big sagebrush and Western yarrow.

When 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 habitat for mule deer and pronghorn antelope. This seeding would also provide winter, summer, and critical early brood-rearing habitat for sage grouse. Seeding this area would reduce the potential for the invasion of non-native invasive weed species.

3. Non-native Invasive Weed Species Control:

Monitoring to detect noxious weed invasion of the burned areas would be done on 60,000 acres of public land administered by the BLM within the Hot Lake Fire perimeter. According to the documentation in the BLM, Elko Field Office, Noxious Weed Database, Scotch thistle and hoary cress sites have been identified and inventoried within the burned area. Treatments would be done on approximately 1 acre of both Scotch thistle and hoary cress. Hoary cress has also been identified and documented to be present along the access roads to this fire. Recent (September 2001) field inspections detected Scotch thistle on the west side of the Hot Lake Fire in the Squaw Valley Allotment.

Squaw Valley Allotment: The vehicle wash-down location would be monitored for noxious weeds. One of two vehicle wash-down locations was on the Midas Road. The Midas Road is designated as an Elko County Road.

Twenty-five Allotment: The vehicle wash-down location would be monitored for noxious weeds. The second vehicle wash-down location was at the intersection of the Izzenhood Road, Izzenhood Gap Road, and Izzenhood Ranch Access Road. The Izzenhood and Izzenhood Gap Roads are designated Lander County Roads. The Izzenhood Ranch Access Road consists of both public and private land.

Long term monitoring (3 years) of existing weed locations throughout the burn and the vehicle wash-down sites would be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the proposed treatment and spread of existing non-native invasive weed species infestations. Any new infestations would be treated and monitored as necessary. By treating prior to seed set and maturation, the spread of noxious weeds within the burned area would be controlled.

B. Structures:

1. Construct New Fence for Resource Protection:

Squaw Valley Allotment: Approximately 5 miles of new fence would be constructed on the east end of the Hot Lake Fire and approximately 1.2 miles of gap fence would be constructed on the west end of the Hot Lake Fire. The gap fences would be constructed as 4 strand barbed wire fences. These fences would be constructed in order to protect the burn and seeding treatment from livestock grazing, which would allow for vegetation to re-establish. These fences would be used to create a permanent pasture within this allotment.

Twenty-five Allotment: Approximately 3.5 miles of new permanent fence would be constructed. In addition, approximately 1.5 miles of temporary fence would be constructed. These fences would be constructed in order to protect the burn and seeding treatment from livestock grazing,

which would allow for vegetation to re-establish. These fences would be evaluated following establishment of the seeding and through the allotment evaluation process to determine if they would be maintained on a permanent basis or removed.

2. Repair Existing Fence for Resource Protection:

Approximately 15.2 miles of the allotment boundary fence between the Squaw Valley and Twenty-five Allotments would be repaired or reconstructed. The purpose of this fence repair or reconstruction is to maintain the integrity of the allotment boundary fence and to provide for proper rangeland and livestock management.

Approximately 11 miles of pasture fences within the Twenty-five Allotment would be repaired or reconstructed.

The fence (approximately 1 mile each) on two existing small exclosures along Little Antelope Creek would be repaired. The purpose of repairing these two exclosure fences are for the protection of riparian habitat along Little Antelope Creek.

C. Erosion Control Treatments:

1. Dozer Line Rehabilitation:

Approximately 56 miles of dozer line would be seeded with crested wheatgrass and intermediate wheatgrass. These areas would be drill seeded, where possible, and broadcast seeded using a dozer where the terrain is too steep or rough to use the drill. The purpose of seeding the dozer line is to reduce the risk of erosion, stabilize the soil, and to encourage revegetation. Approximately 200 feet of dozer line/road would be rehabilitated and closed to vehicle traffic within the Little Antelope Creek Mine Exclosure by pushing back berms and rock material, regrading disturbed areas, and re-establishing the creek drainage. The purpose for rehabilitating this dozer line/road is to re-establish the Little Antelope Creek drainage and to allow the riparian vegetation to re-establish in the drainage.

A small dam was constructed in Willow Creek to make a dip site for the helicopters. An excavator would be used to remove soil from Willow Creek and recontour the side slopes of the creek channel.

2. Road Repair:

The Izzenhood Road would be wetted, regraded, and graveled for approximately 4 miles from the Izzenhood Ranch to the junction with the Lander Well Road. Approximately 22 miles of road from the Izzenhood Gap Road to the Rock Creek Ranch area would require wetting, regrading and graveling in order to re-establish the roadbed, re-establish drainage, and to prevent widening of the existing road or the development and establishment of new roads or travel routes parallel to the existing road. Two culverts would be installed on the Izzenhood Road to facilitate

drainage. The 22 miles of road from the Izzenhood Gap Road to the Rock Creek Ranch is designated a Lander County Road. The BLM would finalize an agreement with Lander County prior to conducting road maintenance activities in order to establish and define road repair activities, agency responsibilities, and cost reimbursement.
An old bridge was damaged (decking boards were broken) on the private segment of the access road to the Izzenhood Ranch. The area of damage to the road consists of no more than 50 feet. The bridge was damaged as a result of repeatedly driving heavy equipment (dozers on lowboys) across this road. A land use agreement was signed on the Buffalo Fire Complex making the BLM responsible for repairing the damage to this road at the location of the damaged bridge. The BLM would remove the bridge decking and fill in the hole with gravel and road base material rather than replace the bridge with a culvert as requested and agreed to by, Monte Price (Ranch Manager and authorized representative of the private landowner).

D. Site Preparation: None

E. Other:

1. Cultural Resource Inventory:

Cultural resource inventories have been completed on approximately 3 miles of dozer line. Cultural resource inventories would be conducted on the remaining approximately 53 miles of dozer line, approximately 12 miles of new permanent and temporary fence construction, and along the 26 miles of road proposed for repair. The cultural resource inventories would be conducted prior to the implementation of the proposed rehabilitation efforts. The Tosawihi Quarries Archaeological District (26EK6624) and Traditional Cultural Property, and historic sites associated with the Ivanhoe Mining District would be avoided during implementation of the rehabilitation efforts. The purpose of inventoring the dozer lines and proposed new fences is to assess and document any damage to cultural resource sites that occurred as a result of the suppression activities and to prevent damage to these sites from the rehabilitation efforts.

2. Wildlife Guzzler Repair:

A wildlife guzzler would be repaired. This guzzler is located on Sixmile Hill. The purpose of repairing the guzzler is to provide a water source for wildlife, which is necessary for the proper management of wildlife habitat.

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 erosion control treatments would encourage regrowth of vegetation, thus reducing future potential air quality impacts.

B. Cultural Resources:

Over 40 cultural resource inventories have occurred within the perimeter of the Hot Lake Fire, locating several hundred archaeological sites and intensively inventoring several thousand acres. The western half of the Hot Lake Fire was previously examined by a sample (Class II) inventory of the Rock Creek Burn Rehabilitation. This and the other inventories indicate that archaeological sites occur at high densities within the Hot Lake Fire perimeter. This fire also includes a small portion of the Tosawihi Quarries Archaeological District and the Tosawihi Traditional Cultural Property (TCP). Together, they incorporate several hundred chipped-stone scatters, quarry pits, and rockshelters; mostly concentrated near the eastern edge of the fire. The TCP is an area of special importance to the Western Shoshone. No dozer line or hand line was constructed in the Tosawihi Quarries Archaeological District or within the TCP. No fire retardant was dropped within either the Archaeological District or the TCP. The Hot Lake Fire occurred within the Ivanhoe Mining District, which was mined for mercury from 1915 to the early 1970's, explored for uranium in 1980, and explored and mined for gold from 1979 to the present. Historic cultural resources present within this mining district include mine workings (shafts, adits, pits and mine sites) and equipment. The historic Rock Creek Ranch buildings burned during an earlier fire.

Following fire suppression, the BLM archaeologists have examined approximately three miles of dozer line. While damage to the Tosawihi Quarries Archaeological District and TCP, numerous sites in the surrounding area within the burn may have been impacted.

Archaeological sites and cultural properties in this area must be afforded protection whenever possible. Section 106 of the National 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 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 the Nevada BLM 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. When 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 the BLM and SHPO, or that have been fully mitigated, would be flagged for avoidance and avoided during rehabilitation activities. Flagging would be removed as soon as possible to minimize the potential for looting and vandalism.

C. Native American Religious Concerns:

By law, policy and executive order, BLM is required to undertake a good-faith consultation process with regional Native American tribal and band governments prior to projects that might affect Native American sacred areas, Traditional Cultural Properties or other traditional values. Native Americans would be consulted as appropriate prior to any ground disturbing activities or herbicide treatments. When the BLM obtains information identifying Traditional Cultural Properties or other areas having traditional or religious significance, then the BLM would insure that reasonable measures are taken to avoid impacts to these areas of concern to Native Americans.

The Hot Lake Fire occurred within a small portion of the Tosawihi Archaeological District and Traditional Cultural Property (TCP), a place of sacred and other importance to the Western Shoshone. Native Americans would be consulted about any ground disturbing activities, such as fence construction and herbicide treatment, prior to the initiation of these rehabilitation activities. The BLM would take measures to avoid or reduce impacts to the areas of concern to Native Americans.

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

No threatened or endangered plant species are known to occur within the Hot Lake Fire perimeter.

The California floater, a freshwater mussel and BLM sensitive species, is likely to be present in the middle Rock Creek gorge. Live floaters have been documented in downstream areas, while two shells with intact hinges were found in the area impacted by Hot Lake Fire on August 20, 2001. Although specific habitat requirements for California floaters are unknown, factors which degrade water quality are generally considered detrimental to freshwater mussels. Effects of the

Hot Lake Fire on Rock Creek are likely to include sediment loading and increases in runoff. However, observations on August 20, 2001 indicate the riparian zone along Rock Creek is essentially intact. Although the fire burned across the floodplain in some locations, the riparian zone along the stream was green and moist at the time of the fire and is expected to filter influxes of ash and sediment. Proposed fencing and rest from livestock grazing would improve the ability

of the riparian zone to filter ash and sediment and to resist channel alterations with increases in runoff.

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 lek, nesting, summer/brood-rearing, and winter 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. 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 the BLM and 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 artificial seeding of big sagebrush species and later successful establishment of these species from this effort would ensure that these species are on site as future seed sources, as well as cover and forage, in the event that natural sources were lost due to the fire and natural recovery is slow (See Migratory Bird Section below). 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 re-establish.

E. 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, and horned lark.

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. 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 three seed mixtures that include a perennial native forb species and two big sagebrush species. Forage kochia would be included in two of the seed mixtures to provide big game forage and, due to its' succulent nature during the summer period, help slow down or stop wildfires. The seed mixtures would help to provide wildlife cover and forage. Seeded plant establishment would help 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.

F. Wildlife:

The subject area provides mule deer intermediate range (October 15 - November 15 and March 15 - April 15 emphasis), crucial winter range (November 16 - March 14 emphasis) and migration corridors to other winter range areas to the south. Use also occurs in some areas during the summer period. The availability of winter habitat is a critical limiting factor for the affected mule deer herd unit. The area also provides pronghorn antelope intermediate range and 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 allotments with many more additional species also found in the vicinity of riparian and meadow habitats on a seasonal or year-long basis. The area provides habitat for many of these species.

Wildlife was adversely impacted by the Hot Lake 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 with three wildlife seed mixes to help restore critical forage and cover more quickly. Proposed fencing and closure of the Rock Creek drainage to livestock grazing on the Squaw Valley Allotment until attainment of establishment criteria outlined in the fire closure agreement or decision would allow for recovery of riparian habitats and improvements in post-fire habitat quality for fisheries and aquatic resources.

G. 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 infestations and cheatgrass 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 animal unit month (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.

H. Non-native Invasive Weed Species:

Fire suppression efforts, including use of engines and other mechanized vehicles, is likely to have introduced noxious weed species seed and spread cheatgrass seed in the burned area. It is unknown whether or not the vehicles and equipment were washed down for noxious weeds prior to arriving on this fire complex. Approximately 1 acre of Scotch thistle and hoary cress are known to exist within the Hot Lake Fire perimeter. In order to reduce the potential for an invasion of noxious weeds, Integrated Weed Management techniques would be implemented including chemical treatments and subsequent monitoring. Monitoring would be conducted over the next three years. When noxious weeds are discovered to have invaded the burn area and/or the vehicle wash-down sites, herbicide treatments would be implemented to reduce the spread of the noxious weeds. Monitoring and noxious weed treatments would help to prevent or reduce noxious weed infestations within the perimeter of the Hot Lake Fire.

I. Water Quality (surface/ground):

Watersheds that burned could be subject to increased flooding and erosion due to the lack of vegetative cover. Increased erosion may result in decreased water quality in receiving waters such as Rock Creek, Ivanhoe Creek, Antelope Creek, and Sixmile Creek. Increased sediment into these streams could negatively impact aquatic species such as fish. The proposed seeding treatments and rest from grazing would minimize the potential of erosion and sediment loading to downstream creeks from runoff of large precipitation events, which would result in reduction of future erosion impacts to burned watersheds by aiding in restoring vegetation.

J. Wetlands/Riparian Zones:

Prior to the fire, habitat conditions along Rock Creek, Ivanhoe Creek, Little Antelope Creek, Sixmile Creek, and other riparian areas in the burned watersheds were in poor condition. The fire impacted some of these areas, although in most cases riparian zones were poorly developed and did not support dense woody or herbaceous communities. In the case of Rock Creek on the Squaw Valley Allotment, much of the riparian zone along the stream remained intact as a result of high moisture levels at the time of the fire. Provided perennial water sources are available, willows and herbaceous riparian species would resprout or re-establish naturally with protection from grazing. The proposed fencing and rest from grazing on the Squaw Valley Allotment would allow recovery and improved function of riparian areas. Healthy riparian areas are effective in filtering ash and sediment and in anchoring streambanks from effects of increased runoff.

K. Floodplains

One major drainage exists within the Hot Lake Fire, which is Rock Creek. Rock Creek is a perennial stream that dissects the Hot Lake Fire. There are no other significant streams within

the burn. In places, the burn reached the edge of Rock Creek's floodplain but consumed very little riparian vegetation. Runoff response is not expected to increase significantly as a result of the fire. Less than one percent of the fire experienced moderate to high burn severity. Rock Creek has a sufficiently functioning floodplain and adequate riparian vegetation to accommodate the small increase in runoff that is expected. Segments of Ivanhoe Creek, Little Antelope Creek, and Sixmile Creek, which are tributaries to Rock Creek, burned in the Hot Lake Fire. Burn severity on these segments of Ivanhoe Creek, Little Antelope Creek, and Sixmile Creek was low. Antelope Creek, which is tributary to Rock Creek, did not burn in the Hot Lake Fire but is located downstream of portions of the burn. A small dam was placed in Willow Creek, which is a tributary to Rock Creek, in order to pool water for aerial suppression efforts. The proposed seeding treatments and rest from grazing pressure would reduce future impacts from flooding by minimizing erosion and sedimentation and by encouraging vegetation regrowth in these drainages flowing into Rock Creek.

L. Visual Resources:

The Hot Lake Fire is within Visual Resource Management (VRM) Classes III and IV. The Hot Lake Fire is within VRM Class IV, except for along Rock Creek. Rock Creek is within VRM Class III. The Class III VRM objective is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Within Class III VRM areas, management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape. The Class IV VRM objective is to provide for management activities which require major modification of the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape can be high. Within Class IV VRM areas, management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewers attention. However, every attempt should be made to minimize the impact of these activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements.

Both the fire itself and fire suppression activities such as creation of dozer lines, have resulted in visual impacts to the area. Changes in these classes should be subordinate to the existing landscape. 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 the Class IV VRM objective.

M. Cumulative Impacts:

Cumulative impacts for proposed Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation treatments are discussed in the programmatic FY 2000 Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Environmental Assessment (NFRPEA) BLM/EK/PL-2000/037, which is available for review at the BLM, Elko Field Office.

References:

United States Department of Agricultural. Natural Resource Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service). 1980. Soil Survey of Northwest Elko County Area, Nevada, Parts of Elko and Eureka Counties.

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

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

NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
DECISION RECORD
HOT LAKE FIRE (X-305)
BLM/EK/PL-2001/068

Finding of No Significant Impact:

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Supplemental Environmental Assessment BLM/EK/PL-2001/068, 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 Hot Lake Fire BLM/EK/PL-2001/068. Approximately 68,332 acres of public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management, Elko Field Office, and 2,578 acres of private land were burned during the Hot Lake Fire in Elko County, Nevada. Of the 68,332 acres of public land that burned, approximately 39,614 acres are located within the Squaw Valley Allotment and 28,717 acres are located within the Twenty-five Allotment.

Approximately 2,219 acres of the public land within the Twenty-five Allotment will be aerially seeded with Siberian wheatgrass, Nordan and Hycrest wheatgrass, Boizoisky Russian wildrye, and forage kochia. Approximately 10,245 acres of upland areas that provide mule deer intermediate range and winter range and sage grouse habitat will be rehabilitated throughout the burn area by site specific aerially seeding Wyoming big sagebrush, basin big sagebrush, forage kochia, and Western yarrow on the Squaw Valley Allotment. Approximately 2,558 acres of upland areas that provide mule deer intermediate and winter range and sage grouse habitat will be rehabilitated throughout the burn area by site specific aerially seeding Wyoming big sagebrush, basin big sagebrush, forage kochia, and Western yarrow on the Twenty-five Allotment. The Sixmile Hill wildlife guzzler will be repaired.

Approximately 7 miles of new fence will be constructed in the Squaw Valley Allotment and approximately 5 miles of new permanent and temporary fence will be constructed in the Twenty-five Allotment. These fences will protect the burned area from livestock. Approximately 27 miles of existing fence will be repaired or reconstructed, including the allotment boundary fence between the Squaw Valley Allotment and Twenty-five Allotment and pasture fences within the Twenty-five Allotment. These fences will be repaired or reconstructed in order to maintain the integrity of these existing fences and provide for proper rangeland and livestock management. The fence (approximately 1 mile each) will be repaired or reconstructed on two small existing

exclosures along Little Antelope Creek in order to protect the riparian vegetation.
Two small (approximately 1 acre each) infestations of Scotch thistle and hoary cress will be treated. Monitoring for noxious weed invasion within the burned and disturbed areas will be conducted and treatments will be applied when weeds are detected.

Approximately 56 miles of dozer line will be rehabilitated. Cultural resource inventories will be completed on the remaining approximately 53 miles of dozer line, 12 miles of proposed new fence, and 26 miles of road proposed for repair, prior to the implementation of rehabilitation activities.

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. Post-fire grazing management, including the period of time needed for closure, will be determined based on the BLM and Permittee agreements, monitoring, and achievement of site specific resource objectives.

Rationale:

Implementation of the proposed action described in the NFRP Supplement EA for the Hot Lake 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 (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.

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Helen Hankins Date
Elko Field Manager