

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This plan has been prepared in accordance with the Interagency Policy Guidance and Direction: Wildland Fire Rehabilitation and Restoration and Attachments-Final Policy Decisions (1998) signed by the Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Policy, Management and Budget and Under Secretary of Agriculture, NRE as well as the Interagency Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Handbook (2001) and Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Technical Reference (2001). This plan provides burned area emergency stabilization and rehabilitation (ESR) recommendations for all lands burned within the Tabor Creek, Stag, Mile Marker 367, North Delano, Rodeo Creek, Sheep, Buffalo, Hot Lake, Dunphy, Dee Gold, Coyote, Bailey and Ranch Fire perimeters and downstream impact areas including: public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and private lands. The primary objectives of the August 2001 Fire Complex, Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) Plan are:

Emergency Stabilization

- To prescribe cost effective post-fire stabilization measures necessary to protect human life, property, and critical cultural and natural resources.
- To promptly stabilize and prevent further degradation to affected resources on lands within the fire perimeter or downstream impact areas and mitigate damages caused by fire suppression operations in accordance with approved land management plans and policies, and all relevant federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

Rehabilitation

- To repair or improve lands unlikely to recover naturally from severe wildland fire damage by emulating historic or pre-fire ecosystem structure, function, diversity, and dynamics according to approved land management plans.
- Restore or establish healthy, stable ecosystems, even if these ecosystems cannot fully emulate historic or pre-fire conditions as specified in approved land management plans.

This plan addresses emergency stabilization and rehabilitation of fire suppression and fire damages. The Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) Team, local resource advisors, and resource specialists conducted an analysis of fire damages throughout the land impacted by the fires. The watershed assessment group assessed the overall watershed changes caused by the fire and developed a burn severity map. Archeologists inventoried suppression impacts for potential damage to cultural resource sites as well as initiating a cultural resource damage assessment. The vegetation

specialist evaluated and assessed fire damages and suppression impacts to vegetative resources, including threatened and endangered (T&E) species, and identified values at risk associated with vegetative losses. The wildlife biologist conducted an assessment of T&E species and initiated and closed Section 7 consultation with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The GIS specialists gathered the data layers necessary for the plan and coordinated GPS activities. The operations specialists inventoried fire suppression impacts, developed specifications for their rehabilitation and initiated repair of fence cuts.

Individual resource Fire Damage Assessment Reports produced by these specialists are in Appendix I. The individual treatment specifications including the effectiveness of monitoring of identified in the assessments can be found in Part F. A summary of the costs by jurisdictions is in Part E. Appendix II contains the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance documentation. Appendix III contains the ESR Plan maps. Appendix IV contains photo documentation. Appendix V contains supporting documentation.

Elko Field Office Bureau of Land Management Priorities

Priorities identified by the Elko Field Office include: Prevent impairment of soil productivity due to accelerated soil loss or physical degradation of the soil resources. Maintenance and improvement of soil cover and productivity would be accomplished through preventive measures and land treatments.

- Protection of cultural resources, T&E species, and general forest and rangeland health.
- Values at risk and protection from erosion and flooding to private residence and other cultural and natural resources.
- Rehabilitation of suppression impacts.
- Protection of cultural resources.
- Preserve and maintain healthy forest and woodland ecosystems.
- Potential reforestation/salvage within burned area.
- Control of noxious weeds within the 13 burned areas.

Other Land Management Direction

The primary concerns are rehabilitation of suppression impacts, and cost effective post fire stabilization actions necessary to protect human life, property, and cultural and natural resources.

Fire Background

The complex of wildfires began on July 25, 2001, when lightning ignited the Tabor Creek fire in the Elko BLM Field Office administrative area. Over the next few weeks lightning ignited 12 additional new fires, including the, Stag, Mile Maker 367, North Delano, Rodeo Creek, Sheep, Buffalo, Hot Lake, Dunphy, Dee Gold, Coyote, Bailey and Ranch

fires. This plan will address a total of 13 fires within Elko, Lander, Eureka and Humboldt Counties, Nevada. Factors contributing to the rapid growth of the many fires included strong and erratic winds, low humidity, extremely dry fuels, and limited access. The complex of fires encompassed approximately 262,215 acres of federal and private lands within four counties within the BLM Elko Field Office administrative area.

Fire Damages and Threats to Human Safety and Natural and Cultural Resources

It is imperative that the following recommendations be implemented as soon as possible. The sooner measures are in place to reduce the risk of catastrophic erosion the better chance the area has for a complete and swift recovery from the fire.

The BAER Team recommendations are:

Treatments:

- C-1, Cultural Inventory of Linear Projects
- C-2, Cultural Inventory of Site Preparation and Seeding Projects
- F-1, Contour Tree Falling
- F-2, Aspen Protection Fence
- F-3, Forest Rehabilitation
- F-4, Monitoring Forest and Woodlands Stands
- F-5, Directional In-stream Tree Falling
- H-1, Exclude Wild Horses from Burned Areas
- O-1, Plan Development and Preparation
- O-2, Dozer Line Rehabilitation
- O-3, Road Rehabilitation
- O-4, Dozer Line Stabilization
- O-5, Hire/fund Emergency Stabilization Manager & Support Positions
- S-1, Flood Warning Signs
- S-2, Recreation Resource Protection
- V-1, Range Reseeding Using Drill or Aerial Methods
- V-10, Construct New Fence Required for Resource Protection
- V-2, Wildlife Reseeding Using Drill or Aerial Methods
- V-3, Noxious Weed Monitoring
- V-4, Noxious Weed Treatment
- V-5, Monitoring Relic Stands of Aspen Removed
- V-6, Monitoring Revegetation of Critical Big Game Winter Range
- V-7, Monitoring Success of Seeded and Areas Managed for Natural Release
- V-8, Repair Pre-existing Fence for Resource Protection
- V-9, Reconstruction of Pre-existing Fence for Resource Protection
- W-1, Straw Mulching (Aerial Application)
- W-2, Monitoring Success of Watershed Protection Seeding
- W-3, Grass Reseeding Watershed Protection
- W-4, Monitoring Severe Watershed Conditions

- W-5, Erosion Cloth/Soil Netting
- W-6, Straw Bail Check Dams

Specifications were developed for all actions meeting the requirements of Fire Suppression or Emergency Fire Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR) funding.

Elko Field Office Management Requirements

The following objectives, restrictions, and mitigation were considered during the development of the Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan.

Emergency Stabilization

- Short and long-term fire impacts to plant communities and vegetative resources on lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management, Elko Field Office, fire and suppression impacts to vegetative resources and values at risk, fire and suppression impacts to rangeland improvement projects within the burned area
- Management strategies which provide for the natural recovery and revegetation of impacted areas. including the establishment of rangeland seeding to increase the effectiveness of reducing future wildland fire size and cost, rehabilitation and monitoring needs supported by specifications to aid in vegetative recovery and soil stabilization, protection and enhancement of other resource values including site productivity, wildlife habitat, riparian/stream habitat, vegetative resources, watershed stability, and potential impacts to wild horse herd management areas
- Extensive loss of critical big game and sage grouse habitat, critical loss of wildlife habitat, (deciduous woodland habitat) as a result of the fires.
- One federally listed species, the Lahontan cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki henshawi*) (LCT) and its habitat occurs in areas impacted by fire, resulting in potential impacts to the LCT from the fire, suppression activities, as well as post fire flooding and water quality issues, and potential impacts to the LCT from rehabilitation actions.
- The threat of exotic annual plant species establishment/domination of burned areas and subsequent increase in fire frequency.
- Potential impacts to Threatened, Endangered, Candidate or Sensitive plant species from the fire, suppression activities, and rehabilitation activities.
- Reforestation of woodland species to restore forest cover within severely burned areas and potential loss of aspen and woodland cover types from fire effects and land management practices.

- Ecological integrity and site productivity of pinyon/juniper, riparian, and shrub-steppe plant communities within BLM lands in accordance with established mission statements and management plan guidelines.
- Occurrence of prehistoric and historic archaeological resources, historic structures, and historic landscapes within the burned area and fire suppression area; potential for impacts to cultural properties consequent to the wildfire, fire suppression and rehabilitation activities; reducing effects of erosion upon cultural resources; assessment of fire and fire suppression effects on previously documented cultural resources, as well as those identified during the ground disturbance inventories associated with the August 2001 Fire Complex; consultation about and protection of sacred/respected places within the burn areas; recommendation of appropriate evaluation, monitoring, or preservation treatments for cultural resources affected by fire, suppression, or rehabilitation activities; and avoidance or mitigation of adverse effects to cultural resources from suppression and rehabilitation activities.
- Burned area provides open access for cross-country travel by hunters and recreationists
- Potential threats to human life and property within and downstream of the fires from potential increases in storm flow runoff and flooding or debris flows, changes in water quality, and potential loss of soil productivity and increased erosion.
- Non-native Invasive Plant control, containment, or eradication is necessary to accomplish the management plans and comply with Nevada State Law and to implement the Integrated Weed Management Program of the Elko Field Office.

Rehabilitation

The following statements in approved Elko Field Office management plans justify the proposed burned area rehabilitation treatments funded with Emergency Fire Rehabilitation funds.

- *“... Resting burned areas... to protect range and soil resources as well as to facilitate desired range management practices.”* (FY2000 Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Environmental Assessment, BLM/EK/PL-2000-037, Page 2, Helen Hankins, September 5, 2000).
- *“... Increase soil stability, improve quality and sustained yield of water, reduce spread of noxious weeds and increase desired plant species to meet objectives of land use plans.”* Final Environmental Impact Statement Vegetation Treatment on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States, Page 1-3, Ray Brubaker, May, 1991)

- “[Wild] horses may need to be removed... to facilitate burned area recovery.” (FY2000 Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Environmental Assessment, BLM/EK/PL-2000-037, Page 5, Helen Hankins, September 5, 2000).
- “Assure protection of significant values from adverse impacts due to recreation use.” (Nevada Recreation Management Strategy and Implementation Plan, Page 15, Edward F. Spang, February 14, 1990).
- “Road repair... to re-establish drainage and surface requirements for public safety.” (FY2000 Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Environmental Assessment, BLM/EK/PL-2000-037, Page 5, Helen Hankins, September 5, 2000).
- “...Cultural resources... would be assessed... and measures taken as needed.” (FY2000 Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Environmental Assessment, BLM/EK/PL-2000-037, Pages 6-7, Helen Hankins, September 5, 2000).