

**NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
DECISION RECORD
EGBERT FIRE (X-164)
BLM/EK/PL2001/050**

Finding of No Significant Impact:

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Supplement Environmental Assessment BLM/EK/PL2001/050, 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 Egbert Fire BLM/PL2001/050. Over 1,051 acres of public rangeland managed by the Bureau of Land Management Elko Field Office and 395 private acres were burned during this fire. Approximately 546 acres of the burned public land will be rehabilitated by planting of multiple species seed mixtures and 100 acres will be planted with native shrub seedlings. Approximately 3.5 miles of dozer line will be rehabilitated. Approximately 5 miles of new fence will be constructed, 2 miles of fence will be reconstructed, and 1.7 miles of fence will be repaired to facilitate grazing closures. Approximately 3.5 miles of dozer line, 9 miles of fence line, and 546 acres to be drill seeded will be inventoried for cultural resources. 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 Egbert 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 Wells 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
EGBERT FIRE (X-164)
BLM/EK/PL-2001/050**

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), 3 (Planting of native shrub or tree seedlings), 5 (Dozer line rehabilitation), 8 (Invasive, nonnative 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 7/27/99.

List of Preparers:

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Project Area Description:

A. Fire Description:

The Egbert Fire was started by a lightning strike and was reported on July 4, 2001. It burned over 1051 acres of public land and 395 acres of private land. In addition, over 508 acres managed by the Humboldt Toiyabe National Forest were also burned. Three grazing allotments were affected: the Gordon Creek Allotment, the Snow Water Lake Allotment, and the Warm Creek Allotment. The fire impacted 2% of the Snow Water Lake Allotment, 20% of the Warm Creek Allotment, and 36% of the Gordon Creek Allotment. One structure was burned.

B. Vegetation and Soil Description:

The burned area ranges in elevation from 5,600 ft to 6,600 ft. In the lower elevations the vegetation was comprised of black greasewood and Basin big sagebrush with an understory of Great Basin wildrye. In the higher elevations the dominant shrubs were mountain big sage, low sage, and bitterbrush with a dominant understory of bluebunch wheatgrass, Indian ricegrass, and Idaho fescue. Most of the vegetation was consumed by fire. Accelerated erosion rates would be expected on these soils until they are rehabilitated.

Soils within the burned area occur on fan piedmont remnants on 4 to 15% slopes. They are deep or moderately deep over a duripan. Surface textures are generally very gravelly, cobbly or stony loams. Subsoils are either loams with a large amount of coarse fragments or clay. Most of the soils have duripans at depths ranging from 16 to 33 inches. Permeability is slow to very slow and runoff is medium. The wind erosion hazard is slight because of the surface armor of gravel and cobble, and the water erosion is slight to moderate.

Proposed Project Treatments:

A. Revegetation:

1. Wildlife native shrub planting:

Approximately 100 acres in the burned portion of the Warm Creek Allotment would be planted by hand with bitterbrush seedlings. The purpose of the planting is to provide forage for livestock and wildlife, particularly critical winter forage for antelope and mule deer, and to reduce the potential for the invasion of invasive, nonnative weed species.

2. Rangeland aerial/drill seeding:

Approximately 218 acres of public rangeland in the Gordon Creek Allotment would be drill seeded with a mixture of Hycrest crested wheatgrass and Siberian crested wheatgrass. Approximately 328 acres of public rangeland in the Warm Creek Allotment would be drill seeded with a mixture of bluebunch wheatgrass, thickspike wheatgrass, and Indian ricegrass. The purpose of the seedings is to provide forage for livestock and wildlife, particularly critical winter forage for antelope and mule deer, and to reduce the potential for the invasion of invasive, nonnative weed species.

3. 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. In particular, dozer lines and adjacent areas would be targeted for noxious weed monitoring and subsequent treatment if weeds are detected.

B. Structures:

1. Fencing:

Approximately 0.8 miles of new permanent fence and 4 miles of temporary fence would be constructed, and 1.7 miles of fence would be repaired using white-topped posts to allow closure of seeded areas to grazing for a period to be determined by post-rehabilitation monitoring. These fences are needed to protect the proposed seeding treatments and to allow for vegetation to become reestablished. In addition, 2 miles of Forest Service/ BLM boundary fence would also be reconstructed to facilitate closure to livestock.

C. Erosion Control Treatments:

1. Dozer line rehabilitation:

Approximately 3.5 miles of dozer lines would be rehabilitated by pushing back berms, regrading disturbed areas, and drill or aerial seeded with crested wheatgrass and Siberian wheatgrass to reduce erosion and encourage revegetation.

D. Site Preparation: None

E. Other:

1. Cultural resource inventories:

Cultural resource inventories would be conducted along the approximately 3.5 miles of dozer lines, 6 miles of fence lines, and 546 acres proposed for drill seeding. 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
Floodplains
Wastes, hazardous/solid
Wetlands/Riparian Zones
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:

The Egbert 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 would account for cultural resources in its projects and undertakings, including fire rehabilitation efforts. Ground disturbing activities such as drilling, dozer line rehabilitation, and fence construction could damage cultural sites. Therefore, areas designated for mechanized seeding and other 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 removed as soon as possible.

C. Native American Religious Concerns:

Native Americans would be consulted as appropriate prior to any ground disturbing activities such as drilling 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.

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

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 and rest from grazing pressure are designed to restore sagebrush habitat and/or reduce the impacts from the invasion or reinvasion of fire prone annual weeds.

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, horned lark, and lark sparrow.

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. Low elevation sagebrush sites, such as the project area, are vulnerable to conversion to cheatgrass types following wildfire. The proposed action to reseed with aggressive perennial grasses to prevent cheatgrass from dominating the site, coupled with secondary efforts to reestablish sagebrush on the stabilized site (as necessary) 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. Visual Resources:

The proposed project treatment area is within Visual Resource Management Class IV and changes in this class should be subordinate to the existing landscape. 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. Reseeding the fire area and dozer lines would serve to reduce the visual impacts in the area. Construction of new fence would create a new linear feature into the landscape but would meet Class IV requirements.

G. Wildlife:

Wildlife was adversely impacted by the Egbert 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, planting of native shrub seedlings, and seeding several areas with seed mixtures conducive to wildlife use. In particular, the proposed seedlings and plantings are specifically designed to benefit sage grouse, antelope, and mule deer. In addition, aerial and drill seeding of lower elevation areas would help establish shrub 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 would 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.

I. Water Quality, surface/ground:

There are no perennial streams within the burned area on the BLM administered portion of the burn. There are a few ephemeral and intermittent drainages within the burn. Higher than normal runoff volumes, and associated sediment, following a large precipitation event in the burned area would be expected, but there would be little impact on water quality since there are no perennial waters nearby. Once the proposed seedings are established, runoff volumes would decrease.

J. Invasive, Nonnative Species:

Fire suppression efforts, including dozer line construction and use of engines and other mechanized vehicles, is likely to have introduced noxious weed species seeds into the burned area. In order to reduce the potential impacts of a future invasion of noxious weeds, monitoring should be conducted after rehabilitation treatments are completed. If noxious weeds are discovered to have invaded the burn area, 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 invasions of the Egbert burn area.

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.)