

**NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
AND
DECISION RECORD
METROPOLIS FIRE (X-156)
BLM/EK/PL2001/054**

Finding of No Significant Impact:

Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan Supplement Environmental Assessment BLM/EK/PL2001/054, 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 Metropolis Fire BLM/PL2001/054. Approximately 32 acres of public rangeland managed by the Bureau of Land Management Elko Field Office and 1105 acres of private lands were burned by the fire. Approximately 4 miles of dozer line will be rehabilitated and 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 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 Metropolis 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.

Helen Hankins
Elko Field Office

Date

**NORMAL FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN SUPPLEMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
METROPOLIS FIRE (X-156)
BLM/EK/PL-2001/054**

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 # 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 fire was started by a lightning strike and was reported on July 3, 2001. It burned approximately 32 acres of public land and 1105 acres of private land. Three grazing allotments were affected: the Metropolis Allotment, the Cedar Hill Allotment, and the Trout Creek Allotment. The fire impacted 3% of the Trout Creek Allotment, 8% of the Cedar Hill Allotment, and less than one percent of the Metropolis Allotment. No structures were burned by the fire.

B. Vegetation and Soil Description:

The burned area ranges in elevation from 6,000 ft to 6,500 ft. Vegetation in the burn was comprised of Wyoming big sage, Basin big sage, mountain big sage, black sage, Utah juniper, Idaho fescue, Great Basin wildrye, bluebunch wheatgrass, and Sandburg's bluegrass.

Soils within the area are shallow to deep with moderate to slow permeability and have slow to moderately slow infiltration. Slopes are moderate to steep, and most vegetation was consumed

by fire.

Soils on the upper slopes of the fire are shallow over limestone, have high gravel and cobble contents, and are carbonatic (have very high calcium carbonate contents). They have a moderate to high water erosion hazard and slight wind erosion hazard. Runoff is rapid.

Soils on the lower slopes on private land are deeper and have less calcium carbonate, and fewer coarse fragments. Water erosion hazard is slight to high for these soils. Wind erosion hazard is slight. The BLM acreage is too small for watershed treatments. The only resource threat from water erosion would be further sedimentation of Bishop Creek which is already full of sediment. Seeding the dozer lines and possibly closing the area from grazing should be sufficient treatment to reduce the risk of excessive amounts of sediment reaching Bishop Creek.

Proposed Project Treatments:

A. Revegetation:

1. 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: None

C. Erosion Control Treatments

1. Dozer line rehabilitation:

Approximately 4 miles of dozer lines would be rehabilitated by pushing back berms, regrading disturbed areas, aerial seeded with crested wheatgrass and Siberian wheatgrass to reduce erosion and encourage revegetation. Seed would be aurally 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.

D. Site Preparation: None

E. Other:

1. Cultural resource inventories:

Cultural resource inventories would be conducted along the approximately 4 miles of dozer lines. 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 erosion control treatment would encourage regrowth of vegetation, thus reducing future potential air quality impacts.

B. Cultural Resources:

The Metropolis 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 dozer line rehabilitation 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 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 will 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 be removed as soon as possible.

C. Invasive, Nonnative Species:

Fire suppression efforts, including dozer line construction and use of engines and other mechanized vehicles, is likely to have introduced cheatgrass and noxious weed species seeds into the burned area. In order to reduce the potential impacts of an invasion of noxious weeds, monitoring would be conducted after rehabilitation treatments are completed. If noxious weeds are discovered to have invaded the burn area, herbicide treatments could be needed to reduce the spread of noxious weeds. Monitoring and noxious weed treatment would help to prevent or reduce any such noxious weed impacts in the Metropolis Fire area.

D. Native American Religious Concerns:

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

E. 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 treatment would reduce the impacts from the invasion or re-invasion of fire prone annual weeds.

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.

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 re-establish 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.

G. 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 dozer lines would serve to reduce the visual impacts in the area.

H. Wildlife:

Wildlife was adversely impacted by the Metropolis Fire primarily through temporary loss of habitat through removal of vegetation by the fire. The proposed rehabilitation treatments include seeding the dozer lines. This would benefit wildlife by helping to restore critical forage and cover more quickly.

I. Water Quality, surface/ground:

Bishop Creek is a perennial and intermittent stream that is located approximately one quarter mile south of the southern portion of the burn. Bishop Creek is tributary to the Humboldt River which is an impaired water for high levels of turbidity, total phosphorus and iron. There are no perennial streams within the burned area. The proposed dozer line seedings and closing the area to grazing should be sufficient treatment to prevent any water quality degradation downstream. High runoff volumes, and associated sediment, following a large precipitation event would have little impact on water quality.

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.)