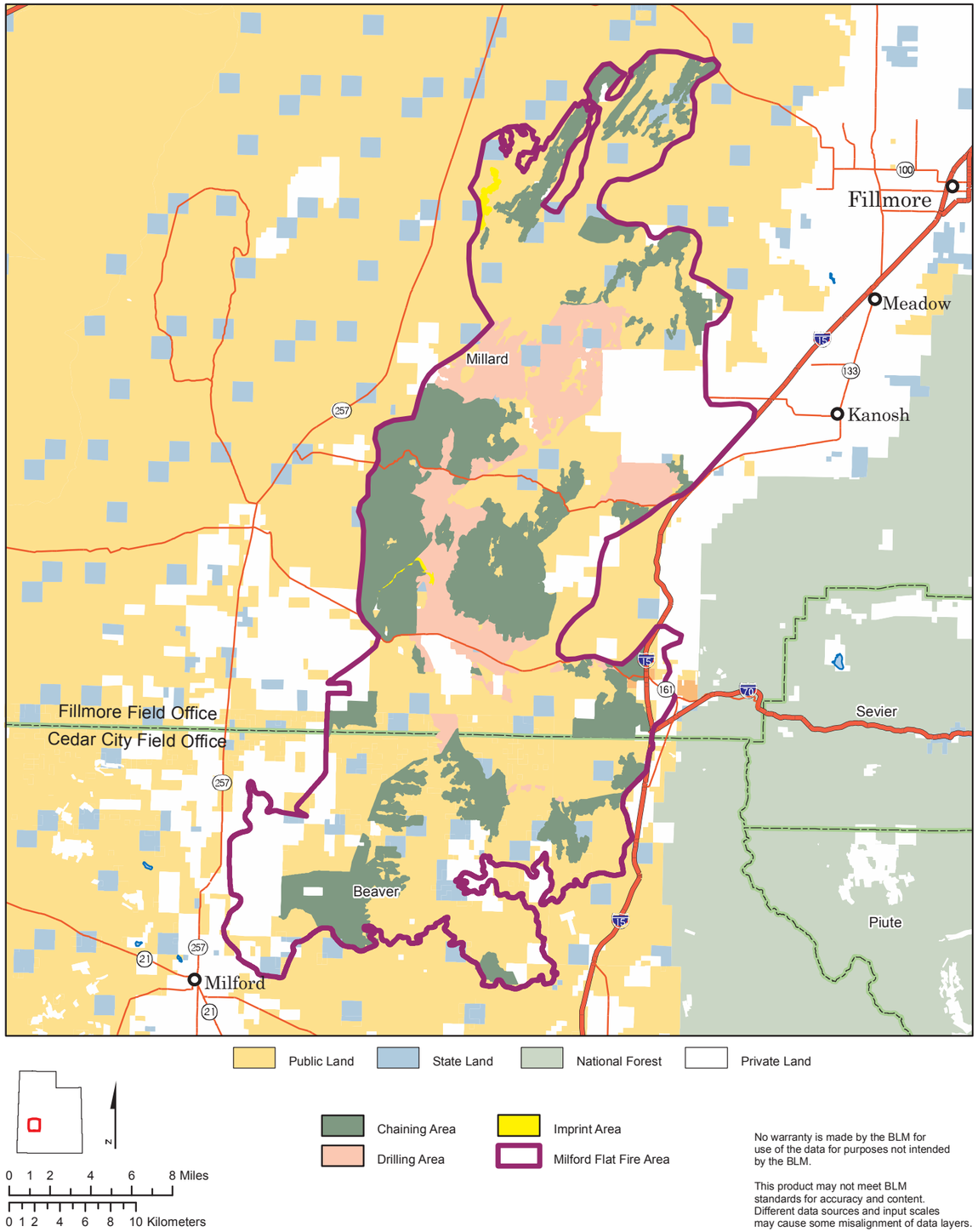
Milford Flat Fire Area



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BLM

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT, UTAH
Cedar City and Fillmore Field Offices

Working with the Utah Partners
for Conservation and Development

Milford Flat Fire Rehabilitation, Stabilization and Restoration Effort

Fall 2007

Milford Flat Fire Background

The Milford Flat Fire started on July 6, 2007 in Beaver County as a result of dry thunderstorms. The fire spread rapidly in cheatgrass, sagebrush and pinyon-juniper stands. The fire exhibited explosive rates of spread, particularly when influenced by the passing thunderstorms. The fire burned on Bureau of Land Management, State, Private and Bureau of Indian Affairs lands. At Containment on July 19, the fire had burned 363,046 acres (112,626 acres in Beaver County and 250,420 acres in Millard County). The Milford Flat Fire is the largest fire in Utah's history.

Working Together

State and Federal agencies have come together under the umbrella of the Utah Partners for Conservation and Development (Utah PCD) to form a collaborative group effort. The team's task is to design and implement stabilization actions for the entire burned area and to do so regardless of land ownership. An implementation team, led by the BLM, was formed which includes members from each entity in the Utah PCD as well as County Commissioners and private landowners.

Scope of the Rehabilitation Effort

Land management agencies have conducted post-fire assessments of the burned areas and have determined that there is a need to conduct stabilization and rehabilitation efforts on 202,000 acres of land. This equates to over 300 square miles. To accomplish this, 1,766,103 pounds of seed is needed. The total cost for this seed and seed application is approximately $17 million. Seed mixes will consist of both native and non-native species such as western wheatgrass, indian ricegrass, bottlebrush squirreltail, sand dropseed, and forage kochia.

In addition to seeding efforts, noxious weed infestations will be treated, 74 miles of burned fence will be replaced, 78 new miles of fence will be constructed, and 315 sediment basins will be developed.

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Treatment Methods

Treatment will begin in October 2007 and will be completed by spring 2008, depending on the weather. Three different methods of treatment will be used.

Drill Seeding

Drill seeding will be conducted in areas with gentle topography where there are no standing trees or rocks to damage the drills. Drill seeding, using a set of triple drills pulled by a farm type tractor, will plant approximately 100 acres per day.

Single Chaining

All of the areas with steep or rough topography and areas covered by trees and/or rocks will be aerial seeded. A seed bed will be prepared and seed will be covered by single chaining. If the site is too steep to chain, the seed will be left uncovered. Single chaining is both a method of seedbed preparation and a seed planting process. It is done using two large caterpillar type tractors that pull a 250-foot chain across the landscape. The chain rolls and tills the soil covering the seed. A single chaining operation will plant approximately 200 to 250 acres per day.

Imprinter Seeding

The third method of planting seed is the use of an imprinter. The imprinter is a large drum with cleats welded on it and is pulled by a small caterpillar-type tractor. The imprinter is used in areas with saline soils or sharp greasewood stems that would damage the rubber tires of a farm tractor. Seed is broadcast at the front of the imprinter and as the imprinter rolls along the ground, its weight "pushes" the seed into the soil. This method is very slow compared to other methods. One imprinter can seed approximately 40 acres per day.

Next Steps

Following the treatments, monitoring will be conducted. Monitoring teams will use existing range monitoring sites in addition to establishing new monitoring sites. First year monitoring will focus on recording what was implemented on the ground. Second and third year monitoring will focus on the effectiveness of the applied treatments and how well they met stated objectives. Protective fences will be constructed around the seeded areas to ensure establishment of seedings. Once the areas are seeded, they would be deferred from grazing by livestock for at least two years for seeding establishment.