

Appendix D

Fire and Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation

Fire

The following table compares fire management categories. The table is an excerpt from the Fire/Fuels Management Plan Environmental Assessment/Plan Amendment for Montana and the Dakotas (2003), and can be found on the internet at http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/prog/fireaviation/fire_management_plans/state_plan.html.

Table D.1 Fire Management Category Descriptions			
<p>Category A: Fire is not desired at all (None of this category is in the planning area)</p> <p>Fire Management Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation and suppression required • Fire should not be used to manage fuels <p>Rationale for Categorization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct threats to life or property • Ecosystems not fire dependent • Long fire return intervals <p>Fire Suppression Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on prevention, detection, and rapid suppression response and techniques <p>Multiple Fire Priority: ¹ Highest</p>	<p>Category B: Unplanned fire is likely to cause negative effects</p> <p>Fire Management Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suppression required • Fire and non-fire fuels treatments may be used <p>Rationale for Categorization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unplanned ignitions would have negative effects on ecosystems unless mitigated <p>Fire Suppression Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on prevention/education and suppression <p>Multiple Fire Priority: ¹ High</p>	<p>Category C: Fire is desired to manage ecosystems, but current vegetative condition creates constraints on use</p> <p>Fire Management Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suppression may be required • Fire and non-fire fuels treatments may be used <p>Rationale for Categorization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant ecological, social, or political constraints <p>Fire Suppression/Use Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on reducing unwanted ignitions, resource threats, and fuels accumulations <p>Multiple Fire Priority: ¹ Medium</p>	<p>Category D: Fire is desired; no constraints on its use (None of this category is in the planning area)</p> <p>Fire Management Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suppression may not be necessary • Both fire and non-fire treatments could be used <p>Rationale for Categorization:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few ecological, social, or political constraints • Less need for fuels treatment <p>Fire Suppression/Use Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on using planned and unplanned wildfire to achieve resource objectives <p>Multiple Fire Priority: ¹ Lowest</p>

¹ If multiple fires were burning, Categories A and B would generally receive priority for fire management resources.

Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ES&R)

Introduction

Emergency stabilization plans and/or rehabilitation plans are prepared after a wildland fire to minimize threats to life or property and stabilize and prevent unacceptable degradation to natural and cultural resources resulting from the effects of the fire, in a cost-effective and expeditious manner. Not all fires need emergency stabilization and/or rehabilitation.

The Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Handbook (H-1742-1) provides detailed information specific to BLM policies, standards, and procedures used in the Burned Area ES&R programs. The Handbook is intended to be the primary guidance to BLM ES&R activities. ES&R activities and treatment undertaken in the HiLine District will follow the Handbook guidance. ES&R activities and treatments in Wilderness Study Areas will comply with policy in the Management of BLM Wilderness Study Areas (BLM Manual 6330). As updates and revisions to the departmental manuals are completed, conformance to the new direction will supersede the criteria included herein.

Emergency stabilization is defined as “Planned actions to stabilize and prevent unacceptable degradation to natural and cultural resources, to minimize threats to life and property resulting from the effects of a fire, or to repair/replace/construct physical improvements necessary to prevent degradation of land or resources. Emergency Stabilization actions must be taken within one year following containment of a wildland fire.” (620 DM 3.3E)

Rehabilitation is defined as “Efforts undertaken within three years of containment of a wildland fire to repair or improve fire-damaged lands unlikely to recover naturally to management approved conditions, or to repair or replace minor facilities damaged by fire.” (620 DM 3.3M)

Emergency stabilization and rehabilitation funds are not used for rehabilitation of wildland fire suppression efforts; this includes rehabilitating firelines, helispots, fire camp, etc. Costs for rehabilitating wildland fire suppression efforts will be funded by the wildland fire project code.

Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Protocols

Emergency stabilization protection priorities are: 1) human life and safety; and 2) property and unique biological resources (designated Critical Habitat for Federal and State listed, proposed or candidate threatened and endangered species) and significant heritage sites (620 DM 3.7A). Burned area rehabilitation protection priorities are: 1) to repair or improve lands damaged directly by a wildland fire; and 2) to rehabilitate or establish healthy, stable ecosystems in the burned area (620 DM 3.8A).

Emergency Stabilization

The objective of emergency stabilization is “To determine the need for and to prescribe and implement emergency treatments to minimize threats to life or property or to stabilize and prevent unacceptable degradation to natural and cultural resources resulting from the effects of a fire.” (620 DM 3.4A)

Emergency stabilization plans are prepared by an interdisciplinary team, immediately following a wildland fire and specify emergency treatments and activities to be carried out within one year following containment of the wildfire. Generally, activities are only prescribed within the perimeter of a burned area.

Allowable emergency stabilization actions are limited to the following items, grouped by issue topic:

Human Life and Safety

- Replacing or repairing minor facilities essential to public health and safety when no other protection options are available.

Soil/Water Stabilization

- Placing structures to slow soil and water movement.
- Stabilizing soil to prevent loss of degradation or productivity.
- Increasing road drainage frequency and/or capacity to handle additional post-fire runoff.
- Installing protective fences or barriers to protect treated or recovering areas.

Designated Critical Habitat for Federal/State Listed, Proposed, or Candidate Species

- Conducting assessments of critical habitat in those areas affected by emergency stabilization treatments.
- Seeding or planting to prevent permanent impairment of designated Critical Habitat for Federal and State listed, proposed or candidate threatened and endangered species.

Critical Heritage Resources

- Conducting assessments of significant heritage sites in those areas affected by emergency stabilization treatments.
- Stabilizing critical heritage resources.
- Patrolling, camouflaging, burying significant heritage sites to prevent looting.

Greater Sage-Grouse Priority Areas and Protection Priority Areas

- Prioritize native seed allocation for use in Greater Sage-Grouse habitat in years when preferred native seed is in short supply. Where probability of success or native seed availability is low, non-native seeds may be used as long as they meet sage-grouse habitat conservation objectives. Re-establishment of appropriate sagebrush species/subspecies and important understory plants, relative to site potential, shall be the highest priority for rehabilitation efforts.
- Design post-ES&R management to ensure long term persistence of seeded or pre-burn native plants.
- Consider potential changes in climate when proposing post-fire seedings using native plants. Consider seed collections from the warmer component within a species' current range for selection of native seed.

Invasive Plants

- Seeding to prevent establishment of invasive plants, and direct treatment of invasive plants. Such actions will be specified in the emergency stabilization plan only when immediate action is required and when standard treatments are used that have been validated by monitoring data from previous projects, or when there is documented research establishing the effectiveness of such actions.
- Using integrated pest management techniques to minimize the establishment of non-native invasive species within the burned area. When there is an existing approved management plan that addresses non-native invasive species, emergency stabilization treatments may be used to stabilize the invasive species.

Monitoring

- Monitoring of treatments and activities for up to three years from date of fire containment.

Burned Area Rehabilitation

The objectives of rehabilitation are: 1) to evaluate actual and potential long-term post-fire impacts to critical cultural and natural resources and identify those areas unlikely to recover naturally from severe wildland fire damage; 2) to develop and implement cost-effective plans to emulate historical or pre-fire ecosystem structure, function, diversity, and dynamics consistent with approved land management plans, or if that is infeasible, then to restore or establish a healthy, stable ecosystem in which native species are well represented; and 3) to repair or replace minor facilities damaged by wildland fire (620 DM 3.4B).

Rehabilitation plans are prepared by an interdisciplinary team as a separate plan, independent of an emergency stabilization plan. The rehabilitation plan specifies non-emergency treatments and activities to be carried out within three years following containment of a wildfire. Generally, rehabilitation activities are prescribed only within the perimeter of a burned area.

Allowable rehabilitation actions are limited to the following items, grouped by issue topic:

Lands Unlikely to Recover Naturally

- Repair or improve lands unlikely to recover naturally from wildland fire damage by emulating historical or pre-fire ecosystem structure, function, diversity, and dynamics consistent with existing land management plans.

Weed Treatments

- Chemical, manual, and mechanical removal of invasive species, and planting of native and non-native species, restore or establish a healthy, stable ecosystem even if this ecosystem cannot fully emulate historical or pre-fire conditions.

Tree Planting

- Tree planting to reestablish burned habitat, reestablish native tree species lost in fire, prevent establishment of invasive plants.

Repair/Replace Fire Damage to Minor Facilities

- Repair or replace fire damage to minor operating facilities (e.g., fences, campgrounds, interpretive signs and exhibits, shade shelters, wildlife guzzlers, etc.) Rehabilitation may not include the planning or replacement of major infrastructure, such as visitor centers, residential structures, administration offices, work centers and similar facilities. Rehabilitation does not include the construction of new facilities that did not exist before the fire, except for temporary and minor facilities necessary to implement burned area rehabilitation efforts.

Monitoring

- Monitoring of treatments and activities for up to three years from date of fire containment.
- After three years, the long-term monitoring of an ES&R project will be officially transferred to a designated resource program. Long-term responsibility for tracking the ES&R investment should be identified early in the ES&R planning process through an interdisciplinary team. The resource program is encouraged to conduct an evaluation at the five-year interval to identify management changes needed to ensure project success in reaching the intended objectives. (WO-IM-2010-195, 9/3/2010).

Policies on timeframes for ES&R planning funding, and implementation are very specific. ES&R treatments must be implemented, to the extent possible, before additional damage occurs to the burned area, immediately down slope of the burned area, or before undesirable vegetation becomes established. Treatments must be implemented at a time that will ensure a high or maximum probability of success. The ES&R Program timeframes in relations to tasks and responsibilities are shown in Table D.2.

Due to the broad spectrum of situations encountered in emergency stabilization and/or rehabilitation, several options of possible treatments, either separately or in combination, must be considered. The ES&R Handbook list several treatments under the Treatment Guidance section.

Table D.2 ES&R Program Timeframes, Tasks, and Responsibilities		
<i>Event</i>	<i>Timeframes</i>	<i>Task</i>
Wildfire occurs.	Immediately	Manager assigns a Resource Advisor (RA). While the fire is still burning, the RA, in consultation with resource specialists and the appropriate Manager, decides if ES&R is warranted bases on Values-at-Risk/ Resources-at-Risk. If it is decided that ES&R is warranted, the RA is to notify the Central Montana Fire Zone (CMFZ) or District Office ES&R lead, prior to containment. The CMFZ or District Office ES&R Lead will then notify the State Office ES&R Program Lead of the scope of the fire and the anticipated fire containment date.
Initial ES Plan needed. Submit Form 1310-2 plus supplemental attachments (both 2822 and 2881 may be indicated on Form, although funding under 2881 may not occur until the following fiscal year).	Within 7 days of fire containment	Concurrently to State ES&R Program Lead, National ES&R Program Lead, and Denver Budget Office (BC-612).
Complete ES Plan needed. Prepare/Submit complete ES Plan.	Within 21 days of fire containment	<\$100,000 submit to State ES&R Program Lead. ≥\$100,000 submit to State ES&R Program Lead (for review) and concurrently to National ES&R Program Lead.
Receive approval/disapproval of ES Plan.	Within 6 working days of receipt by Approval Office	Requesting Office receives memo approving funding, or need for revision on a plan by plan basis. State Director or acting has funding approval authority for plans <\$100,000. Bureau Budget Officer, after concurrence with Assistant Director WO-200 or their designee, has funding approval authority for plans ≥\$100,000.
Receive notification of ES funding approval.	Immediately	Local fire office enters project data into NFPORS.
BAR Plan needed. Prepare/Submit BAR Plan.	Timely, ideally soon after submitting ES Plan, but no later than Sept. 5 annually	To State ES&R Program Lead and National ES&R Program Lead. Field Office. Local fire office enters project data into NFPORS.
Receive approval/disapproval of BAR Plan funding.	Before October 31 annually	Funding for BAR Plans is approved via the Annual Work Plan.
Accomplishment Report and Funding Request Form for next FY 2881 funds.	Early September	To State ES&R Program Lead for review and submission to National ES&R Program Lead for concurrence. Funding for years 2 and 3 is approved via the Annual Work Plan.
Close-out Report.	Early September of 3 rd year	To State ES&R Program Lead for review and submission to National ES&R Program Lead.

