

**BLM IDAHO POST-FIRE RECOVERY PLAN
EMERGENCY STABILIZATION AND BURNED AREA REHABILITATION**

FIR GROVE FIRE

**BLM/TWIN FALLS DISTRICT/SHOSHONE FIELD OFFICE
IDAHO STATE OFFICE**

FIRE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Fire Name	Fir Grove
Fire Number	HS1N
District/Field Office	Twin Falls/Shoshone
Admin Number	LLIDT03000
State	Idaho
County(s)	Camas/Gooding
Ignition Date/Cause	7-28-2013/Lightning
Date Contained	7-30-2013

Jurisdiction	Acres
BLM	5,578
State	310
Private	1,255
Other	0

Total Acres	7,143
Total Costs	\$108,000
Costs to LF2200000	\$0
Costs to LF3200000	\$108,000

Status of Plan Submission (check one box below)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Initial Submission of Complete Plan
<input type="checkbox"/>	Amendment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Updating or Revising the Initial Submission

PART 1 - PLAN SUMMARY

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE FIRE

The Fir Grove fire started as a lightning strike on July 28, 2013 in the North Gooding grazing allotment north of Gooding, Idaho. The fire burned a total of 7,143 acres in Gooding County. Of those acres that burned 5,578 were on BLM administered land, 310 acres on Idaho State land, and 1,255 acres on private land. The fire was contained primarily in the North Gooding grazing allotment but also burned into the Hash Springs, Schooler Creek and North Shoshone grazing allotments.

The fire burned in mid-elevation Mountain big and low sagebrush habitat with a component of mountain shrubs in the plant community. The mix of vegetation communities in the burn area provided for mule deer and elk spring and summer range. The entire fire area is within sage-grouse Preliminary Priority Habitat (PPH). The burn area is mapped as sage grouse nesting and brood rearing habitat.

Fire intensities were a mix of high and low intensity across the burn area. The low intensity areas contained unburned islands of vegetation, primarily low sagebrush ecological sites. The proposed treatments will be focused on stabilization of sage grouse PPH habitat that is vulnerable to noxious weed expansion. This area is priority for Emergency Stabilization (ES) and Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR) efforts.

LAND USE PLAN CONSISTENCY

The following treatments are proposed under this ES and BAR plan.

Emergency Stabilization

S5 Weed Control

S12 Livestock Closure

S13 Monitoring

Burned Area Rehabilitation

R5 Weed Control

R7 Fence, Gate, Cattleguard

The applicable land use plan for the ES/BAR project area is the 1976 Bennett Hills Management Framework Plan (MFP). The proposed treatments in this BAR plan conform to the Bennett Hills MFP. The treatments outlined in this plan are also consistent with the treatments analyzed in the Shoshone and Burley Field Office Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan and Environmental Assessment #ID-077-2004-008.

The project is also in conformance with the analysis of Alternative E, the selected alternative, in the 2008 Final Fire, Fuels and Related Vegetation Management Direction Plan Amendment (FMDA) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Final FMDA/EIS amends all Land Use Plans for the Shoshone Field Office except the Craters Management Plan, to provide direction and guidance for fire/fuels and related vegetation management.

The ESR team developed objectives and treatments which respond to the identified issues and concerns. The BLM would evaluate this plan based on the success or failure in meeting these objectives.

COST SUMMARY TABLES

Emergency Stabilization (LF2200000):

Action/ Spec. #	Planned Action	Unit (acres, WMs, number)	# Units	Unit Cost (If Applicable)	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16	Totals by Spec.
S12	Closures (Livestock)	No.	1	\$0.00	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL COSTS (LF2200000)					\$0	\$00	\$0	\$0	\$0

Burned Area Rehabilitation (LF3200000):

Action/ Spec. #	Planned Action	Unit (acres, WMs, number)	# Units	Unit Cost (If Applicable)	FY14	FY15	FY16	Totals by Spec.
R1	Planning (Project Mgmt.)	WM's	1		\$3,000	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$9,000
R5	Noxious Weeds	Acres	5,578	\$1.79	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$30,000
R7	Fence Repair	Miles	7.20	\$6,666.67	\$48,000	\$0	\$0	\$48,000
R13	Monitoring	Acres	5,578	\$1.25	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$21,000
TOTAL COSTS (LF3200000)					\$68,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$108,000

PART 2 – POST-FIRE RECOVERY ISSUES AND TREATMENTS

Issues relate to resource problems caused by the wildfire and include both the immediate wildfire effects as well as effects predicted to occur as a result of the wildfire. Determining the appropriate funding code must be based on the scope of the issue, purpose of the treatment, and the availability of funds.

EMERGENCY STABILIZATION ISSUES AND TREATMENTS

Emergency Stabilization Objectives: “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.” 620DM3.4

Emergency Stabilization Priorities: 1). Human Life and Safety, and 2). Property and unique biological (designated Critical Habitat for Federal and State listed, proposed or candidate threatened and endangered species) and significant heritage sites. 620DM3.7

ES Issue 1 - Human Life and Safety.

Not applicable.

ES Issue 2 - Soil/Water Stabilization.

Livestock Closure

The Fire Grove fire completely removed vegetation cover and negatively impacted forage resources. The burn area would be rested from livestock grazing until monitoring shows that rehabilitation and vegetation recovery objectives have been met. This rest would provide the opportunity for existing vegetation resources to stabilize the burn area and seeding efforts to establish. The burn area primarily affected the North Gooding, Schooler Creek, Hash Springs, and North Shoshone grazing allotments.

Treatment/Activity: S12 Livestock Closure

- A. *Treatment Activity Description.* The Fir Grove burn area would be rested from livestock grazing until monitoring shows that ES/BAR rehabilitation objectives have been met.
- B. *How does the treatment relate to damage or changes caused by the fire?* The objective of this treatment is to rest the burn area from livestock grazing to provide the opportunity for existing vegetation resources to stabilize the burn area. Recovery of the existing native perennial plant community would inhibit the expansion of annual vegetation and stabilize soil resources.
- C. *Why is the treatment/activity reasonable, within policy, and cost effective?* No costs under ES are associated with the livestock closures.

ES Issue 3 - Habitat for Federal/State Listed, Proposed, or Candidate Species.

See BAR Issue 2/Weed Treatments/Wildlife Habitat discussion.

ES Issue 4 - Critical Heritage Resources.

Not Applicable.

ES Issue 5 - Invasive Plants and Weeds.

See Bar Issue 2/Weed Treatments/Noxious Weeds and Fire Intensity and Vegetation discussion.

BURNED AREA REHABILITATION ISSUES AND TREATMENTS

Burned Area Rehabilitation Objectives. 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. 620DM3.4

Burned Area Rehabilitation Priorities. 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. 620DM3.8

BAR Issue 1 - Lands Unlikely to Recover Naturally.

Not Applicable.

BAR Issue 2 - Weed Treatments.

The following is a list of common pre-burn vegetation in order of dominance. The list was developed using field surveys of unburned islands of vegetation and range management trend monitoring plot data. This list is for vegetation determined to be in the burn area.

Common Pre-burn Vegetation in Order of Dominance

Mountain Big sagebrush, *Artemisia tridentata ssp. vaseyana*
Low Sagebrush, *Artemisia arbuscula*
Bluebunch Wheatgrass, *Pseudoroegneria spicata*
Idaho Fescue, *Festuca idahoensis*
Sandberg bluegrass, *Poa secunda*
Bitterbrush, *Purshia tridentata*

Noxious Weeds

Diffuse Knapweed, *Centaurea diffusa*
Rush skeletonweed, *Chondrilla juncea*

Ecological Site(s)

Stony Clayey 8-16 Low Sagebrush/Bluebunch Wheatgrass
South Slope Gravelly 12-16 Mountain Big Sagebrush/Bluebunch Wheatgrass
Loamy 12-16 Mountain Big Sagebrush/Idaho Fescue

Soil-vegetation correlation information indicates that the burn area is located primarily on a Stony Clayey 8-16 Low Sagebrush/Bluebunch Wheatgrass, South Slope Gravelly 12-16 Mountain Big Sagebrush/Bluebunch Wheatgrass, or a Loamy 12-16 Mountain Big Sagebrush/Idaho Fescue ecological site. The potential natural plant communities on these sites would be comprised of Mountain big and low sagebrush over story with principal understory plants dominated by bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho Fescue. Antelope bitterbrush is an important browse component of these plant communities. Vegetation observations and data show a relatively intact native plant community.

Fire Intensity and Vegetation

Due to the intact mid-elevation native plant community, natural vegetation recovery is predicted to be good across the burn area. The high fire intensity areas were primarily in the mountain big sagebrush sites. The high intensity burn areas removed most of the plant cover and have exposed soils to accelerated soil erosion and noxious weed invasion. These areas are a major concern due to wind erosion and the expansion of noxious weeds. The low intensity fire areas were primarily in low sagebrush sites that contained numerous unburned islands.

Wildlife Habitat

The Fir Grove burn negatively affected 7,143 acres of sage grouse PPH. The burn also negatively affected habitat for mule deer and elk. Proposed noxious weed control efforts will be the focus in this area due to high fire intensities and associated negative impacts. Due to the wildfire impacts, current conditions are not optimum for sage grouse or big game habitat. Control of noxious weeds will be critical to the natural recovery of habitat conditions.

Noxious Weeds

Diffuse knapweed and rush skeletonweed are the primary noxious weeds of concern with high potential to increase within the burned area and surrounding rangeland. These weeds were documented during the fire reconnaissance surveys.

The current state of the infestation is treatable if done within the next three growing seasons. Without a noxious weed control effort noxious weeds will significantly increase negatively affecting sage grouse PPH and big game habitat and livestock forage capabilities. If an

emergency treatment is not implemented the economic impact to natural resources and the local economy will be significant. The costs to suppress noxious weeds after a significant expansion has occurred increases exponentially. Spot herbicide spraying and biological control would be proposed under rehabilitation to suppress the expansion of these weeds.

Treatment Activity: R5 Noxious Weeds

A. *Treatment/Activity Description.* Noxious weed inventory and control within the burned area would be done for three years after the fire to directly treat the expected weeds. All actions would be in accordance with the Shoshone District Noxious Weed Management Plan, Environmental Assessment #ID050-EA-92031. Diffuse knapweed and rush skeletonweed are the primary noxious weeds targeted.

In addition to the noxious weed control efforts, spring and fall hand planting of sagebrush and bitterbrush would be implemented with non-ESR funding.

B. *How does the treatment relate to damage or changes caused by the fire?* The objective of this treatment is to identify and control the expected noxious weed increase using spot herbicide application on the burned area. In addition, biological control agents for knapweed would be utilized in areas not easily accessible to spraying equipment (rocky outcrops). Noxious weed infestations are present in the burn area and are expected to increase due to the removal of existing plant cover by the wildfire. Noxious weed control would be conducted for three years under BAR.

C. *Why is the treatment/activity reasonable, within policy, and cost effective?* Weed treatments in this Field Office typically run about \$3.21 per acre. Field work would be combined with other weed treatments in the area for cost efficiency. The proposed treatment is consistent with current policy for fuels management and sage-grouse habitat management.

BAR Issue 3 - Tree Planting.

Not applicable.

BAR Issue 4 - Repair/Replace Fire Damage to Minor Facilities.

Livestock Management Fences

Approximately 7.2 miles of BLM pasture fences was damaged or destroyed by the fire. Primary damage occurred in the Schooler Creek and Hash Springs allotments. Damaged wire, corners and braces would be repaired or replaced. The repairs would be needed to maintain the integrity of the grazing systems and keep adjacent livestock grazing from entering the burn area during the rest period.

R7 Fence/Gate/Cattleguard

A. *Treatment/Activity Description.* The objective of this treatment is to repair or replace

approximately 7.2 miles of BLM livestock management fence damaged by the fire. Damaged wood corners and braces would be replaced with galvanized steel posts. Damaged wire would also be repaired. The management fences would be constructed to BLM fence standards.

B. *How does the treatment relate to damage or changes caused by the fire?* The wildfire damaged fences associated with the livestock management of the affected allotments. Reconstruction and repair of management fences damaged by the fire would maintain the future integrity of the existing livestock grazing system. Repair of damaged management fences would also help to manage vegetation recovery.

C. *Why is the treatment/activity reasonable, within policy, and cost effective?* Fence repair contracts typically run \$5,000 per mile. This cost is typically lower than construction of new fence. Damaged wood stretch points and corners would be replaced with galvanized steel pipe thus increasing the longevity of the structures and would be resistant to future wildfire damages.

PART 3 – DETAILED TREATMENT COST TABLES

Fir Grove-HS1N-Burned Area Rehabilitation		Units	FY14	FY15	FY16	Total Costs
R1	<i>Planning (Plan Prep/Project Mgmt.)</i>					
	Project Management Field Office	WM's	3,000	3,000	3,000	9,000
	Total		3,000	3,000	3,000	9,000
R5	<i>Noxious Weeds</i>					
	Labor	WM's	6,000	6,000	6,000	18,000
	Travel/Vehicles	Total	1,000	1,000	1,000	3,000
	Supplies/Materials	Total	3,000	3,000	3,000	9,000
	Total		10,000	10,000	10,000	30,000
R7	<i>Fence/Gate/Cattle Guard</i>					
	Fence Material	Total	14,400			14,400
	Travel/Vehicles	Total	800			800
	Contract	Total	28,800			28,800
	Contract Administration	WM's	4,000			4,000
	Total		48,000	0	0	48,000
R13	<i>Monitoring</i>					
	Labor	WM's	6,000	6,000	6,000	18,000
	Travel/Vehicles	Total	500	500	500	1,500
	Supplies/Materials	Total	500	500	500	1,500
	Total		7,000	7,000	7,000	21,000
	BURNED AREA REHABILITATION TOTALS		\$68,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$108,000

PART 4 – SEED LISTS

Not applicable.

PART 5 - NATIVE/NON-NATIVE PLANT WORKSHEET

A. Proposed Native Plants in Seed Mixtures (Both ES & BAR Treatments)

Not applicable.

B. Proposed Non-native Plants in Seed Mixture (Both ES & BAR Treatments)

Not applicable.

C. Proposed Seed Species – Natives & Non-Natives (Both ES & BAR Treatments)

Not applicable.

PART 6–COST-RISK ANALYSIS

A. Probability of Treatments Successfully Meeting Objectives

Action/ Spec. #	Planned ES Action (LF20000ES)	Unit (acres, WMs, number)	# Units	Total Cost	% Probability of Success
S12	Closures (OHV, livestock, area)	#	1	\$0	100
TOTAL COSTS:				\$0	

Action/ Spec. #	Planned BAR Action (LF32000BR)	Unit (acres, WMs, number)	# Units	Total Cost	% Probability of Success
R5	Noxious Weeds	Acres	5,578	\$30,000	90
R7	Fence/Gate/Cattleguard	Miles	7.2	\$48,000	100
R13	Monitoring	Acres	5,578	\$21,000	100
TOTAL COSTS:				\$99,000	

B. Cost Risk Summary

1. Are the risks to natural resources and private property **acceptable** as a result of the fire if the following actions are taken?

Proposed Action: Yes No Rationale for answer: The noxious weed treatments would protect the burn area and adjacent BLM lands against further expansion of noxious weeds.

No Action: Yes No Rationale for answer: Wildlife habitat on adjacent unburned lands would be compromised with the expansion of noxious weeds.

Alternative(s): Yes No Rationale for answer: N/A

2. Is the probability of success of the proposed action, alternatives or no action acceptable given their costs?

Proposed Action: Yes No Rationale for answer: Monitoring and observations of recent weed control efforts in similar soils and precipitation zones indicate that success would be high (Clover/FK04/2010 and Dead Horse/F9FT/2011 fire monitoring reports). Normal climatic conditions and the exclusion of livestock grazing for on-site vegetation recovery and establishment would increase the probability of success.

No Action: Yes No Rationale for answer: The burned area has a high potential for expansion of invasive plants and noxious weeds. There is also high potential for invasion of noxious weeds into adjacent unburned areas.

Alternative(s): Yes No Rationale for answer: N/A

3. Which approach will most cost-effectively and successfully attain the objectives and therefore is recommended for implementation from a Cost/Risk Analysis standpoint?

Proposed Action:

No Action:

Alternative(s):

Comments: None

C. Risk of Resource Value Loss or Damage

No Action - Treatments Not Implemented (check one)

Resource Value	N/A	None	Low	Medium	High
Unacceptable Loss of Topsoil					X
Weed Invasion					X
Unacceptable Loss of Vegetation Diversity					X
Unacceptable Loss of Vegetation Structure					X
Unacceptable Disruption of Ecological Processes					X
Off-site Sediment Damage to Private Property			X		
Off-site Threats to Human Life		X			
Other-loss of Access Road Due to Plugged Culverts	X				

Proposed Action - Treatments Successfully Implemented (check one)

Resource Value	N/A	None	Low	Medium	High
Unacceptable Loss of Topsoil			X		
Weed Invasion			X		
Unacceptable Loss of Vegetation Diversity			X		
Unacceptable Loss of Vegetation Structure			X		
Unacceptable Disruption of Ecological Processes			X		
Off-site Sediment Damage to Private Property			X		
Off-site Threats to Human Life		X			
Other-loss of Access Road Due to Plugged Culverts	X				

PART 7–MONITORING PLAN

Monitoring and evaluation of ESR treatments would be implemented to ensure that treatments are properly implemented, effective, and maintained. Monitoring methods may be qualitative or quantitative, and would be commensurate with the level of treatment complexity and extent. Monitoring and evaluation information would provide adaptive management feedback to improve ESR treatment performance. Monitoring would be the responsibility of the BLM interdisciplinary team. An annual monitoring summary report would be submitted documenting treatment effectiveness.

Treatment/Activity: S5 and R5 Noxious Weed Treatments

1) Treatment Objectives:

Diffuse knapweed and rush skeletonweed are the primary weeds of concern in the burn area. It is expected that these weeds would expand their range as a result of the fire. Since these weed species are not uniformly distributed across the burn area a quantifiable objective cannot be determined until the first year inventory occurs.

The objective for the first growing season is to conduct an inventory of the burn area and treat any noxious weeds discovered on the burn area.

The objective for the second and third years is to decrease the acreage needing treatment as determined by the first year inventory.

2) Describe how implementation will be monitored:

During the first growing season treatment, a detailed map of location, weed species sprayed, and the amount of herbicide utilized would be documented. The second and third year objective would be measured by the number and size of locations sprayed and the amount of herbicide utilized.

3) Describe how effectiveness will be monitored, how it will be measured, and within what time period.

At the end of three years of treatment, the herbicide spray data would be summarized. If further treatment is required beyond the third year then the responsibility for treatment would be forwarded to the Twin Falls District normal weed spraying program.

Treatment/Activity: S12 Livestock Closure

1) Treatment Objectives:

Exclusion of livestock is critical for the recovery of burned vegetation or establishment and protection of new seedlings. The burn area and seed treatment area would be closed to livestock

grazing for a minimum period of two growing seasons to promote recovery of burned vegetation and/or to facilitate the establishment of seeded species as specified in the 2005 Shoshone and Burley Normal Fire Rehabilitation Plan (#ID-077-2004-008).

2) Describe how implementation will be monitored:

Resumption of livestock grazing would ultimately depend on monitoring and meeting of ES/BAR plan natural recovery objectives. Recovery of the treated area would be monitored for availability to grazing on a yearly basis. The monitoring for grazing availability and recommendations for opening the burn area to livestock would be the responsibility of an interdisciplinary team.

Implementation is monitored through rangeland management administration. A grazing decision would be issued closing the burn area to livestock grazing.

3) Describe how effectiveness will be monitored, how it will be measured, and within what time period.

Natural recovery areas would be considered recovered and available for grazing when:

- Recovered herbaceous vegetation is providing sufficient ground cover to protect the site from accelerated erosion and expansion/conversion to annual grasses and noxious weeds.
- The amount of bare mineral soil (lacking cover of plants, litter, or biological soil crust) is within 10% of what would be expected for the site. Recommended study methods include line-point intercept or step point cover methods and photo points.

A qualitative visual assessment of the following would also be considered:

- Plant vigor (perennial plants)
- Precipitation information during the non-growing (winter) and growing (spring through early summer) seasons
- Competition with invasive annual plants and noxious weed species
- Seed Production

An evaluation of collected monitoring data is completed documenting that reintroducing grazing to the area would not cause a downward trend in vegetation recovery.

Treatment Activity: R7 and S7 Fence/Gate/Cattleguard

1) Treatment Objectives:

The objective of this treatment is to repair or replace approximately 7.2 miles of BLM livestock management fence damaged by the fire. Damaged wood corners and braces would be replaced with galvanized steel posts. Damaged wire would also be repaired. The management fences would be constructed to BLM fence standards.

2) Describe how implementation will be monitored:

Implementation is monitored through contract administration. Any changes from the planned implementation would be noted in the project file “as built” discussion.

3) Describe how effectiveness will be monitored, how it will be measured, and within what time period.

Repair and replacement of damaged fences and protective fence installation will be monitored through contract administration. Repairs and protective fence installation will be documented in a project file “as built” and filed in the project file. Repairs and protective fence installation will be completed within the first year of the fire.

PART 8 - MAPS

1. Fire Perimeter
2. Colored Land Status Map
3. Burned Management Fences/Other Structures (guzzlers, signs, etc.)
4. Seeding or Seedling Treatment areas

PART 9 – REVIEW, APPROVALS, and PREPARERS

TEAM MEMBERS

Position	Team Member (Agency/Office)	Initial and Date
Team Leader	Joe Russell (BLM, Shoshone FO)	JR 8/13/13
Operations	Scott Uhrig (BLM, Twin Falls DO)	SU 8/13/13
NEPA Compliance & Planning	Lisa Cresswell (BLM, Shoshone FO)	LC 8/13/13
Botanist	Danelle Nance (BLM, Shoshone FO)	DN 8/13/13
Cultural Resources/Archeologist	Lisa Cresswell (BLM, Shoshone FO)	LC 8/13/13
Rangeland Mgt. Specialist	Claire Josaitis (BLM, Shoshone Field FO)	CJ 8/13/13
Wildlife Biologist	Gary Wright (BLM, Shoshone FO)	GW 8/13/13
GIS Specialist	Cassie Mavencamp (BLM, Shoshone FO)	CM 8/13/13
Resource Advisor(s) on Fire	Danelle Nance (BLM, Shoshone FO)	DN 8/13/13

PLAN APPROVAL

“The Agency Administrator is responsible for developing, implementing, and evaluating emergency stabilization and rehabilitation plans, treatments, and activities.” 620 DM 3.5C

/s/ Elizabeth Maclean

8/20/13

FIELD OFFICE MANAGER

DATE

FUNDING APPROVAL

The funding of ES treatments is approved through the appropriate administrative approval level in coordination with the National Office Budget Shop. As funding is available, ES funding requested within a plan that totals below \$100,000 may be approved by the State Director, while ES funding of \$100,000 and above must be approved by the WO. If the ES funding cap is reached, all ES funding will be approved through the National Office in coordination with State ES&R Coordinators to determine highest priority projects. Funding of all BAR treatments is accomplished through a scoring process and is dependent on accurate entries into NFPORS. All funding is approved and allocated on a year-by-year basis.