

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

**PLAN TEMPLATE 2010  
COTTONWOOD FIRE (H6QO)**

**BLM Twin Falls District Office  
IDAHO STATE OFFICE**

**FIRE BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Fire Name	Cottonwood
Fire Number	LFESH6QO0000 / LFBRH6QO0000
District/Field Office	Twin Falls District Office
Admin Number	LLIDT00000
State	IDAHO
County(s)	LINCOLN
Ignition Date/Cause	06/29/2014 Other
Date Contained	06/30/2014
Jurisdiction	<i>Acres</i>
Private	9
BLM	687
Total Acres	696
Total Costs	\$26,000
Costs to LF2200000 (2822)	\$0
Costs to LF3200000 (2881)	\$26,000

**Status of Plan Submission** (check one box below)

X	Initial Submission of Complete Plan
	Updating or Revising the Initial Submission
	Amendment

## **PART 1 - PLAN SUMMARY**

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON FIRE.**

The Cottonwood fire started from human causes in the Crater Butte grazing allotment north of Dietrich, Idaho. The fire burned a total of 696 acres in Lincoln County. Of those acres that burned 687 were on BLM administered land and 9 acres were on private land. The fire burned through the Southwest and East pastures of the Crater Butte allotment.

The fire burned in low-elevation Wyoming big sagebrush habitat. Greater sage-grouse Priority General Habitat (PGH) burned a total of 694 acres, 685 of which are BLM lands. The majority of the burn area has been seeded in past rehabilitation efforts and should recover without a seeding effort. However, cheatgrass, an invasive annual grass, and noxious weeds pose a serious threat across the entire burn area.

### **LAND USE PLAN CONSISTENCY**

#### **R5 - Noxious Weeds BAR Issue 2**

The applicable land use plan for the ES and BAR project area is the 1985 Monument Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The Monument RMP states that lands administered by the BLM in this area will be managed in order to:

- 1) Maintain or improve wildlife habitat for crucial mule deer winter range;
- 2) Improve poor or fair condition rangeland;
- 3) Maintain, improve, protect, and restore watershed conditions; and
- 4) Control the spread of noxious weeds on public lands and eradicate them where possible and economically feasible.

The proposed treatments in this ES and BAR plan conform to the Monument RMP. The BAR 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.

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 treatments outlined in this plan are also consistent with the treatments analyzed in the Programmatic Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan and Environmental Assessment, NEPA # DOI-BLM-ID-T000-2011-0001-EA.

#### **R7 - Fence/Gate/Cattleguard BAR Issue 4**

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### **R12 - Closures (area, OHV, livestock) BAR Issue 2**

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**COST SUMMARY TABLES**

**Emergency Stabilization (LF2200000)**

Action/ Spec #	ES Issue #	Planned Action	Unit (Acres, WMs, Number)	# Units	Unit Cost (If Appl.)	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	Totals by Spec.
S1										
S2										
S3										
S4										
S5										
S6										
S7										
S8										
S9										
S10										
S11										
S12										
S13										
S14										
		<b>TOTAL COSTS (LF2200000)</b>				<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>OTHER FUND CODE TOTALS:</b>										
		TOTAL COSTS (???)								
		TOTAL COSTS (???)								
		TOTAL COSTS (???)								

**Burned Area Rehabilitation (LF3200000)**

Action/ Spec #	BAR Issue #	Planned Action	Unit (Acres, WMs, Number)	# Units	Unit Cost (If Appl.)	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	Totals by Spec.
R1		Planning (Project Mgmt)	WMS	1	\$6,000.00	\$0.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$6,000.00
R2										
R3										
R4										
R5	2	Noxious Weeds	Acres	687	\$21.84	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$15,000.00
R6										
R7	4	Fence/Gate/Cattleguard	Miles	1	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00
R8										
R9										
R10										
R11										
R12	2	Closures (area, OHV, livestock)	#	687	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
R13										
R14										
<b>TOTAL COSTS (LF3200000)</b>						<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>	<b>\$7,000</b>	<b>\$7,000</b>	<b>\$26,000</b>
<b>OTHER FUND CODE TOTALS:</b>										
TOTAL COSTS (???)										
TOTAL COSTS (???)										
TOTAL COSTS (???)										

## **PART 2 - POST-FIRE RECOVERY ISSUES**

### **EMERGENCY STABILIZATION ISSUES**

#### **1 - Human Life and Safety**

N/A

#### **2 - Soil/Water Stabilization**

N/A

#### **3 - Habitat for Federal/State Listed, Proposed, or Candidate Species**

N/A

#### **4 - Critical Heritage Resources**

N/A

#### **5 - Invasive Plants and Weeds**

N/A

### **BURNED AREA RECOVERY ISSUES**

#### **1 - Lands Unlikely to Recover Naturally**

N/A

#### **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 areas not previously treated or in poor ecological condition.

##### Common Pre-burn Vegetation in Order of Dominance:

Sandberg bluegrass, *Poa secunda*

Crested wheatgrass, *Agropyron cristatum*

Cheatgrass, *Bromus tectorum*

Gray rabbitbrush, *Ericameria nauseosa*

Wyoming big sagebrush, *Artemisia tridentata ssp. wyomingensis*

Rush skeletonweed, *Chondrilla juncea*

Diffuse knapweed, *Centaurea diffusa*

Russian knapweed, *Acroptilon repens*

##### *Ecological Site(s):*

Loamy 8-12 Wyoming Big Sagebrush/Bluebunch Wheatgrass

Soil-vegetation correlation information indicates that the burn area is located primarily on a Loamy 8-12" Wyoming big sagebrush / bluebunch wheatgrass ecological site. The potential

natural plant community on this site would be comprised of a Wyoming big sagebrush shrub overstory with principal understory plants dominated by bluebunch wheatgrass.

Rush skeletonweed, Russian knapweed, and diffuse knapweed are the most common noxious weeds, and can dominate areas following a burn without treatment. Scotch thistle is also scattered throughout the burn.

### *Fire Intensity and Vegetation*

The majority of the fire was characterized by light to moderate fire intensity. Vegetation in the fire area was primarily crested wheatgrass, sagebrush and scattered native herbaceous grasses, with isolated patches dominated by cheatgrass. The entire area could be susceptible to the expansion of cheatgrass and noxious weeds without treatment.

### *Noxious Weeds*

Diffuse knapweed, Russian knapweed, scotch thistle, 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, as well as data from ongoing weed treatments. The current state of the infestation is treatable if done within the next three growing seasons. Without a noxious weed control effort, rush skeletonweed, Russian knapweed, and diffuse knapweed will significantly increase negatively affecting antelope winter range 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. Weed control would be conducted years 2 and 3 under BAR.

### *Livestock Closure*

The Cottonwood burn area would be rested from livestock grazing until monitoring shows that rehabilitation objectives have been met. This rest would provide the opportunity for existing vegetation resources to stabilize the burn area.

### **3 - Tree Planting**

N/A

### **4 - Repair/Replace Fire Damage to Minor Facilities**

#### *Livestock Management Fences*

Approximately 1 mile of interior pasture fence was damaged or destroyed by the fire. 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.

## **PART 3 - DESCRIPTION OF TREATMENTS**

### **Issue 2 - Weed Treatments**

#### ***R5 Noxious Weeds***

##### **A. Treatment/Activity Description**

Noxious weed inventory and control within the burned area would be done the second and third year following 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, Russian knapweed, scotch thistle, and rush skeletonweed are the primary noxious weeds targeted.

##### **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). Knapweed, scotch thistle, and rush skeletonweed 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 the second and third year under BAR.

##### **C. Why is the treatment/activity reasonable, within policy, and cost effective?**

Weed treatments in this Field Office typically run about \$7.28 per acre. Field work would be combined with other weed treatments in the area for cost efficiency.

#### ***R12 Closures (area, OHV, livestock)***

##### **A. Treatment/Activity Description**

The Cottonwood 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 purpose 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. Establishment of a 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 BAR are associated with the livestock closures.

### **Issue 4 - Repair/Replace Fire Damage to Minor Facilities**

#### ***R7 Fence/Gate/Cattleguard***

##### **A. Treatment/Activity Description**

The objective of this treatment is to repair or replace approximately 1 mile of interior livestock management fence damaged by the fire. Damaged wood corners and braces would

be replaced with 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 allotment. 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 steel pipe thus increasing the longevity of the structures and would be resistant to future wildfire damages.

**PART 4 - DETAILED TREATMENT COST TABLE**

Action / Spec #	Action Description	Unit Type	# Units	Unit Cost	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	Total Cost
<b>R1</b>	<b>Planning (Project Mgmt)</b>								
1	Planning (Project Mgmt)	WM'S	3	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$6,000.00
	<b>Total</b>			<b>\$2,000.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$2,000.00</b>	<b>\$2,000.00</b>	<b>\$2,000.00</b>	<b>\$6,000.00</b>
<b>R5</b>	<b>Noxious Weeds BAR Issue 2</b>								
1	Noxious Weeds	Acres	2,061	\$7.28	\$0.00	\$5,001.36	\$5,001.36	\$5,001.36	\$15,004.08
	<b>Total</b>			<b>\$7.28</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$5,000.00</b>	<b>\$5,000.00</b>	<b>\$5,000.00</b>	<b>\$15,000.00</b>
<b>R7</b>	<b>Fence/Gate/Cattleguard BAR Issue 4</b>								
1	Fence Repair	Miles	1	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00
	<b>Total</b>			<b>\$5,000.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$5,000.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$5,000.00</b>
<b>R12</b>	<b>Closures (area, OHV, livestock) BAR Issue 2</b>								
1	Closures	Number	1	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
	<b>Total</b>			<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>BAR</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>\$7,007.28</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$12,000.00</b>	<b>\$7,000.00</b>	<b>\$7,000.00</b>	<b>\$26,000.00</b>
<b>Project</b>	<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>\$7,007.28</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$12,000.00</b>	<b>\$7,000.00</b>	<b>\$7,000.00</b>	<b>\$26,000.00</b>

**PART 5 - SEED LISTS**

**DRILL SEED**

**AERIAL SEED**

**SEEDLINGS**

<b>Seedling Species</b>	<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>Acres of Seedlings planted.</b>	<b># of Seedlings per Acre</b>	<b>Total # of Seedlings</b>	<b>Cost / Seedling</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
TOTALS:		0.0	0	0		\$ 0.00

## **PART 6 - NATIVE/NON-NATIVE PLANT WORKSHEET**

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

**1. Are the native plants proposed for seeding adapted to the ecological sites in the burned area?**

Yes  No  Rationale:

**2. Is seed or seedlings of native plants available in sufficient quantity for the proposed project?**

Yes  No  Rationale:

**3. Is the cost and/or quality of the native seed reasonable given the project size and approved field unit management and Plan objectives?**

Yes  No  Rationale:

**4. Will the native plants establish and survive given the environmental conditions and the current or future competition from other species in the seed mix or from exotic plants?**

Yes  No  Rationale:

**5. Will the existing or proposed land management practices (e.g. wildlife populations, recreation use, livestock, etc.) maintain the seeded native plants in the seed mixture when the burned area is re-opened?**

Yes  No  Rationale:

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

**1. Is the use of non-native plants necessary to meet objectives, e.g., consistent with applicable approved field unit management plans?**

Yes  No  Rationale:

**2. Will non-native plants meet the objective(s) for which they are planted without unacceptably diminishing diversity and disrupting ecological processes (nutrient cycling, water infiltration, energy flow, etc.) in the plant community?**

Yes  No  Rationale:

**3. Will non-native plants stay on the site they are seeded and not significantly displace or interbreed with native plants?**

Yes  No  Rationale:

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

**PART 7 - COST-RISK ANALYSIS**

**A. Probability of Treatments Successfully Meeting Objectives**

<b>Action/ Spec #</b>	<b>ES Issue #</b>	<b>Planned BAR Action (LF3200000)</b>	<b>Unit (acres, WMs, Number)</b>	<b># Units</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>% Probability of Success</b>
					<b>\$ 0.00</b>	
<b>Action/ Spec #</b>	<b>BAR Issue #</b>	<b>Planned BAR Action (LF3200000)</b>	<b>Unit (acres, WMs, Number)</b>	<b># Units</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>% Probability of Success</b>
R5	2	Noxious Weeds	Acres	687	\$15,000.00	90%
R7	4	Fence/Gate/Cattleguard	Miles	1	\$5,000.00	100%
R12	2	Closures (area, OHV, livestock)	#	687	\$ 0.00	100%
					<b>\$20,000.00</b>	

## 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. Normal climatic conditions and the exclusion of livestock grazing for on-site vegetation recovery would increase the probability of success.

No Action Yes  No  Rationale for Answer:

The burned area has a high potential for expansion of 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

Alternative(s)

No Action  
Comments:  
None.



## C. Risk of Resource Value Loss or Damage

### No Action - Treatments not Implemented

Resource Value	N/A	None	Low	Med	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

Resource Value	N/A	None	Low	Med	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 8 - MONITORING PLAN**

### **R5 - Noxious Weeds - BAR Issue 2**

#### **Identify the objective of the treatment:**

Diffuse knapweed, Russian knapweed, scotch thistle, and rush skeleton weed 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.

#### **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.

#### **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.

### **R7 - Fence/Gate/Cattleguard - BAR Issue 4**

#### **Identify the objective of the treatment:**

The objective of this treatment is to repair or replace approximately 1 mile of interior livestock management fence damaged by the fire. Damaged wood corners and braces would be replaced with steel posts. Damaged wire would also be repaired. The management fences would be constructed to BLM fence standards.

#### **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.

#### **Describe how effectiveness will be monitored, how it will be measured, and within what time period:**

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

## **R12 - Closures (area, OHV, livestock) - BAR Issue 2**

### **Identify the objective of the treatment:**

Exclusion of livestock is critical for the recovery of burned vegetation or establishment. The burn area would be closed to livestock grazing to promote recovery of burned vegetation as specified in the 2013 Programmatic Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Plan and Environmental Assessment (NEPA # DOI-BLM-ID-T000-2011-0001-EA), until treatment and natural recovery objectives are met.

### **Describe how implementation will be monitored:**

Resumption of livestock grazing would ultimately depend on monitoring and meeting of 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.

### **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 consider:**

- 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

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

## **PART 9 - MAPS**

1. - H6QO Cottonwood Fire
2. - Cottonwood Fences to Repair/Replace

## **PART 10 - REVIEW, APPROVALS, and PREPARERS**

### **TEAM MEMBERS**

**Position Team Member (Agency/Office Initial Date)**

### **PLAN APPROVAL**

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

/s/ Elizabeth Maclean

7/9/2014

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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.