

Second Soberanes BAER Team Assesses Watersheds Soberanes Fire Area

A second Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) team was assembled by the Los Padres National Forest on October 12 to begin a rapid 7 day assessment of the southern half of the Soberanes Fire burned area.

While many wildfires cause little damage to the land and pose few threats to fish, wildlife and people downstream, some fires create situations that require special efforts to prevent further catastrophic damage after the fire. Loss of vegetation exposes soil to erosion; runoff may increase and cause flash flooding; sediments may move downstream and damage houses or fill reservoirs and put endangered species and community water supplies at risk.

BAER is an emergency program aimed at managing imminent unacceptable risks to human life and safety, property, or critical natural and cultural resources from post-wildfire damaging events. The Burned Area Emergency Response Team is sent to fires to determine the need for and to prescribe and implement EMERGENCY treatments to minimize threats to life or property and to stabilize and prevent unacceptable degradation to natural and cultural resources resulting from the effects of the fire. Teams identify values at risk from the effects of the fire. .

The purpose of the BAER program is to assess and prevent damage from rain events on burned areas, not repair damage from either flames or flood after it occurs.

The BAER team's role will be to assess watersheds on all lands, then inventory values at risk and determine the need for emergency measures and treatments on National Forest lands. The team will assess the watersheds for post-fire rain related impacts such as increased flooding, debris flow potential, and increased soil erosion.

The US Forest Service team includes the following specialists: wildlife biologists, archeologists, engineers, botanists, wildlife biologists, trails specialists, soil scientists, hydrologists, and recreation personnel.

The Soberanes Fire started on July 22 as the result of an illegal campfire and burned 132,127 acres. It was the biggest wildfire of the season in California and is currently 100 percent contained as of October 12. The fire burned on federal, state and private lands in Monterey County.