

Shasta-Trinity National Forest

Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER)

Post-Fire BAER Assessment



September 17, 2021

BAER Information: (707) 853-4243

FOREST SERVICE BAER TEAM BEGINS POST-FIRE ASSESSMENT OF MCFARLAND FIRE

After a large wildfire, sometimes special actions are necessary to provide for public safety and protect critical natural and cultural resources on National Forest System (NFS) lands. For example, loss of vegetation exposes soil to erosion, runoff may increase and cause flooding, and sediment may move downstream damaging roads and infrastructure or put endangered species and cultural resources at-risk. The Forest Service Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) program addresses these situations on NFS lands with the goal of guarding the safety of Forest visitors and employees and protecting federal property, and critical natural or cultural resources from further damage.

A BAER team has been established by the Shasta-Trinity National Forest to begin burned area assessments of the McFarland Fire. BAER assessments are rapid evaluations of the burned area to identify unacceptable risks on NFS lands from post-fire threats and to assist land managers with preparing burned areas for rainstorms. The team's focus is on the emergency actions necessary to protect human life and safety, property, and critical natural and cultural resources on NFS lands. The team shares burned area information from the assessments with other federal, tribal, state, and local agencies with post-fire responsibilities on state and private lands both within and downstream of burned areas, such as USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), National Park Service (NPS), National Weather Service (NWS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and US Geological Survey (USGS).

BAER teams consist of scientists and specialists including hydrologists, geologists, soil scientists, engineers, botanists, biologists, archeologists, and geographic information specialists. The teams collect data during ground surveys and complete GIS and modeling to evaluate the post-fire risks. The first step in the BAER assessment process is taking satellite imagery and data collected during ground surveys to produce a soil burn severity map. The soil burn severity provides the baseline information to determine changed watershed conditions for assessing potential watershed impacts from wildfires. This information is then compiled and presented to Forest leadership along with recommended BAER emergency stabilization treatments in a BAER assessment report.

Rainstorm run-off is sometimes, but not always, increased on burn scars. BAER reports are shared with interagency cooperators who work with downstream private homeowners and landowners to prepare for potential post-fire flooding and debris flow impacts. Homes or businesses that could be impacted by flooding from federal land that resulted from wildfires may be eligible for flood insurance coverage from the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Information about NFIP is available through FEMA at www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program, or www.floodsmart.gov/wildfires. Other flood preparedness information is available at www.ready.gov/floods at www.floodsmart.gov/.

SPECIAL NOTE: *Everyone near and downstream from the burned areas should remain alert and stay updated on weather conditions that may result in heavy rains over the burn scars. Flash flooding may occur quickly during heavy rain events--be prepared to take action. Current weather and emergency notifications can be found at the National Weather Service website: <https://www.weather.gov/sto/>.*

McFarland Post-Fire BAER Assessment information is available at: <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/7847/>

