



## RIM BAER ASSESSMENT UPDATE – SEPTEMBER 24, 2013

SONORA, CA (September 24, 2013) – The BAER assessment team finalized their analysis and findings of the burned area for the Rim wildfire that burned over 250,000 acres on the Stanislaus National Forest ([www.fs.usda.gov/stanislaus](http://www.fs.usda.gov/stanislaus)) and Yosemite National Park ([www.nps.gov/yose/](http://www.nps.gov/yose/)). The Forest Service hydrologists and soils scientists also completed their modeling for predicted post-fire water run-off and erosion levels.

The BAER team identified critical values-at-risk and is finalizing their recommended emergency stabilization actions and treatments for these values that will be included in their BAER assessment report along with their data, analysis, and findings. The team presented its assessment report to the Forest Supervisor today, who will then forward it onto BAER coordinators at the Forest Service Regional Office and Washington Office for review, approval and funding.

It is expected that the Stanislaus National Forest will receive Rim BAER funding for the emergency stabilization actions and treatments by October 2. Once the funding is received, the BAER team's analysis and report will be shared with the public and posted on the "Rim Post-Fire BAER" InciWeb site. BAER emergency stabilization treatments funded from an initial Rim BAER request began this past weekend and fire suppression repair by the current Rim incident management team is ongoing.

The Rim BAER assessment team held public meetings on Thursday evening, September 19 in Sonora and Monday evening, September 23 in Groveland, California. BAER interagency cooperators, stakeholders, county and congressional representatives also attended both meetings.

The BAER team also shared their initial burn severity map (<http://www.inciweb.org/incident/map/3726/2/>) for the Rim Fire which shows that approximately 56% of the 253,000 acres assessed within the fire perimeter are either unburned or received a low-severity burn, 37% sustained a burn of a moderate severity, and approximately 7% burned at a high severity. Burn severity indicates the effect the fire had on soils. High severity burns can result in hydrophobic (water-repellant) soil conditions, sterilization of the seed bank, removal of vegetative ground cover, and increased soil erosion and water flows in canyons and stream channels.

BAER specialists described the post-fire predicted increased run-off and sediment erosion that could occur from the Rim burn scar during their modeled 2-year 24-hour storm event. It is expected that more ash and debris flows will occur as high severity burn areas in the upper areas of the Tuolumne and Merced River drainages receive heavy rain showers.

Even though the Rim Fire burned both federal and private land, effects of post-fire flooding and debris flows could reach lands beyond the Forest and Park boundaries. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a federal agency, has programs to assist businesses and private land and homeowner mitigate these post-fire impacts.

Federal assistance to private landowners is the primary responsibility of the NRCS through its Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program ([www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ca/programs/?cid=nrcs144p2\\_064025](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/ca/programs/?cid=nrcs144p2_064025)). NRCS conducts damage survey reports for private lands adjacent to and downstream from burned areas. NRCS uses these reports, along with the BAER team's assessment report, to develop emergency measures to reduce the impacts from potential increased water and mud flows, and assist private landowners with

recommended emergency measures. NRCS local service center office locations are available at [ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/CA/news/Publications/general/nrcs\\_ca\\_map-1-13.pdf](ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/CA/news/Publications/general/nrcs_ca_map-1-13.pdf).

Winter storms can cause streams and canyons adjacent to and downstream of the burn scar areas to flow with ash and sediment. Caution is recommended when approaching stream crossings. Do not attempt to cross flooded streams. Be aware that low lying areas can flood from upstream storms due to fire scars. Even after emergency measures and treatments are implemented to minimize the post-fire risks, the burned areas may still pose a risk to downstream areas from potential mudflows and flash flooding. Residents living near burned areas need to monitor weather reports and public safety bulletins, and be aware of current weather conditions and forecasts.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** *Everyone near and downstream from the fire area should remain alert and stay updated on weather conditions that may result in heavy rains over the burn scar. Flash flooding may occur quickly during heavy rain events. Current weather and emergency notifications can be found at the **National Weather Service, Sacramento Office** ([www.wrh.noaa.gov/sto/brief/wwa\\_bc\\_cal.php](http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/sto/brief/wwa_bc_cal.php)) website.*

As updated information becomes available, it will be posted on InciWeb at [www.inciweb.org/incident/3726/](http://www.inciweb.org/incident/3726/).

