



Waldo Canyon Fire BAER Assessment Executive Summary Report July 20, 2012

The Waldo Canyon Fire started on June 23, 2012, and was 100% contained on July 10, 2012. The fire burned approximately 18,247 acres within El Paso County, of which 14,422 acres are on National Forest System (NFS) lands, 147 acres are on Department of Defense land, and 3,678 acres are on non-forest lands. The initial Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) assessment has been completed and addressed all National Forest System (NFS) lands within the burned area. Areas of low soil burn severity (41% of burn area) still have intact ground cover and are not expected to have an increased watershed response. Moderate soil burn severity areas (40% of burn area) have reduced ground cover and some loss of organics in the soil. These areas are expected to respond similarly to areas of high soil burn severity (19% of burn area).

The potential for increased flows leading to flooding and debris flows is high. Runoff and sediment yield is expected to increase substantially in the first 3-7 years. Vegetation is expected to re-sprout in the majority of the burned area within 5-7 years though re-establishment of vegetation across the burned area could take many more years. However, recovery of vegetation is at risk because of potential introduction and spread of weeds.

Within and downstream of the burn area, there are potential threats to health and safety resulting from increased post-fire watershed responses including higher run-off, increased sediment, landslides and debris flow within private property, campgrounds and other facilities and along roads and trails. Given the predicted effects of the fire, all of the areas within and adjacent to the fire perimeter on both NFS lands and on non-federal land are at serious risk from any significant rain on the burned area over the next 3-5 years.

The BAER assessment team worked with cooperating agencies to identify initial concerns and information needs. These meetings helped the BAER team identify downstream values at risk and consider treatment options for NFS lands. This information was used in drafting the BAER assessment report.

Proposed treatments on NFS lands will help to reduce impacts of the post fire events. However, those treatments will not completely mitigate the effects of the post-fire flooding, landslides and debris flows. Additional treatments are needed on private lands within and downstream of the fire perimeter to further reduce those impacts. Given the topography of the burned area and lands downstream, the appropriateness and effectiveness of individual treatments varies by location.

Once approved by the Forest Service Regional and Washington Offices, the final BAER report will be posted to the Waldo Canyon Fire InciWeb website (<http://www.inciweb.org/incident/2929/>). The BAER Specialist reports that accompany the BAER assessment report are also posted on Inciweb.

SAFETY NOTICE: Over the next 3-5 years, it is critical that appropriate agencies continue to inform the public of the potential hazards resulting from post-fire flooding, landslides and debris flows. There is a high likelihood that access may be comprised along travel routes that provide for ingress and egress throughout and downstream of the burn area.

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