

Pike & San Isabel National Forests, Cimarron & Comanche National Grasslands

Waldo Canyon Fire Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) News Release



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BAER AERIAL MULCH TREATMENTS BEGIN FOR THE WALDO CANYON FIRE AREA

Colorado Springs, CO (August 24, 2012) – The Waldo Canyon Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) team has officially awarded the aerial mulching BAER treatment contract to Bradco Environmental.

The mulching treatment was recommended by the BAER assessment team to protect life and provide for public safety. The treated areas are expected to provide an overall approximate reduction in post fire water run-off and sediment flow by 20%. BAER hydrologist Mary Moore stated, "This treatment should reduce the immediate response following a storm to give people time to safely get to higher ground in areas that could be impacted by increased water and sediment flows."

The BAER assessment team previously identified specific areas within the burn to be treated by aerial mulching to provide immediate ground cover. The total of 3,038 acres on national forest system lands will be treated with Ag Straw and shredded wood. The Ag Straw is from Colorado and woodshred is being created on-site by a contractor who is felling hazard trees along roads within the Waldo Canyon Fire. The felled hazard trees are then processed into shredded wood chips by a grinder and aerially applied to the key hillslopes.

Bradco Environmental is utilizing four helicopters for the aerial mulching treatments. The work should be completed by the end of September. The BAER implementation team expects the Ag Straw aerial treatment to begin on Saturday, August 25, while the woodshred aerial treatment is expected to begin on Wednesday, August 29.

The Pike National Forest reminds the public and hunters that all Forest Service trails and roads within the entire Waldo Canyon Fire perimeter, including Rampart Reservoir, continue to be closed to the public. Even though the Waldo Canyon Fire is considered fully contained, the fire has not been declared controlled by the Forest's fire managers. The public needs to be aware that Forest Service law enforcement officers are issuing citations to violators who venture into the closed area of the fire.

Additionally, the fire area will continue to be closed during the aerial mulching treatments; however the Forest and BAER team will plan for viewing opportunities of this operation to be available for the public and the media. These specific locations will be identified and will be provided in a BAER information update after the aerial mulching application begins on Saturday afternoon.

The BAER implementation team continues to coordinate their emergency stabilization treatments with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Colorado Department of Transportation, El Paso County, and the cities of Colorado Springs, and Manitou Springs, along with other state and local agencies responsible for flood control and assistance to landowners downstream of burned area federal lands (http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov/news/pas/2012_Fires/2012_Fires.html).

NRCS is also working cooperatively with the El Paso County Department of Public Works (DPW) and cities and communities adjacent to and downstream from the Waldo Canyon Fire burned area to evaluate potential threats to specific businesses, homes, and neighborhoods.

Federal assistance to private landowners is the primary responsibility of the NRCS through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program (http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov/news/pas/2012_Fires/2012_Fires_EWP_Assistance.html).

For Waldo Canyon BAER information, contact Public Affairs Officer Barb Timock at (719) 553-1415, or Cathleen Thompson at (707) 853-4243. Additional fire information is available at <http://www.inciweb.org/incident/2929/>. Follow us on Twitter at http://twitter.com/PSICC_NF.

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