

Jaroso Post-Fire Response

<http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/3491/>

**Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER)**

BAER Information: (707) 853-4243

BAER Assessment Update – July 14, 2013

PECOS, NM (July 14, 2013) – The BAER assessment team finalized their analysis and findings of the burned area for the Jaroso wildfire that burned 11,141 acres of the Pecos Wilderness area on the Santa Fe National Forest (www.fs.usda.gov/santafe/). 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 expects to present its assessment report to the Forest early next week, who will then forward it onto BAER coordinators at the Forest Service Regional and Washington Offices.

The Jaroso BAER assessment team held public meetings on Friday evening, July 12 in Chimayo and Saturday afternoon, July 13 in Pecos, New Mexico. BAER interagency cooperators, stakeholders, and congressional representatives also attended both meetings. Contact information for the interagency cooperators involved in post-fire response can be found on the “Jaroso Post-Fire Response” InciWeb site: <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/3491/>.

The BAER team also shared their initial burn severity map (<http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/maps/3491/>) for the Jaroso Fire which shows that approximately 34% of the 11,141 acres within the fire perimeter are either unburned or received a low-severity burn, 11% sustained a burn of a moderate severity, and approximately 55% burned at a high severity. Burn severity indicates the effect the fire had on vegetation and 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 for the Jaroso burn scar during their modeled 25-year storm event lasting 2-hours over the burned area. It is expected that more ash and debris flows will occur as high severity burn areas in the upper areas of the Rio Medio and Rio Frijoles drainages receive heavy rain showers.

Residents of the Cundiyo and Rio Chiquito on the western side of the Jaroso burned area could see the predicted run-off, mud and debris flows from Rio Medio and Rio Frijoles travel down their drainages and then join together as the Santa Cruz River and enter the reservoir – and could potentially top and spill over the dam from BAER modeled-rain events.

High severity burn areas in the upper watersheds of Rio Mora-Pecos River, Panchuela Creek, and Jack’s Creek travel down their drainages and eventually join the Pecos River. With the Tres Lagunas burned area, and the Jaroso burned area, residents and businesses in the Pecos Canyon area could expect increased run-off, flooding, and mud-debris flow events for the next 3-7 years following these wildfires.

Even though the Jaroso Fire burned only Forest Service System lands within the Pecos Wilderness, effects of post-fire flooding and debris flows could reach lands beyond the Forest boundary. 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.nm.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp/ewp.html). 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 [www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/directory/area field.html](http://www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/directory/area_field.html).

Recent storms have caused streams and arroyos adjacent to and downstream of the burn scar areas to flow with ash and sediment. Caution is recommended when approaching stream crossing. Do not attempt to cross flooded streams or arroyos. Be aware that low lying areas can flood from upstream storms from the 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, Albuquerque Office** (<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/abq/>) website.*

As updated information becomes available,
it will be posted on InciWeb at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/3491/>.

