



October 9, 2018

BAER Information: (415) 881-1871

BAER UPDATE – PREPARING FOR RAINSTORMS

While many wildfires cause minimal damage to the land and pose few threats to the land or people downstream, some fires cause damage that requires special efforts to prevent problems afterwards. Wildfire increases the potential for flooding, post-fire soil erosion and debris flows that could impact campgrounds, fishing areas, homes, structures, roads, and other infrastructure within, adjacent to, and downstream from the burned area.

Post-fire, watershed conditions will naturally receive and transport water and sediment differently than during pre-fire conditions. Thunderstorms and winter rain events in the mountains can bring heavy rain storms. Residents and visitors should remain alert to weather events and plan ahead when travelling along roads downstream from the burned areas of the recent Utah wildfires.

A Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) team is working with the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache and Manti-La Sal National Forests to assess the condition of the watersheds on federal land that were burned in the Bald Mountain and Pole Creek fires. The BAER assessment team identifies potential emergency threats to critical values-at-risk, and recommends emergency stabilization response actions that are implemented on federal lands to reduce potential threats.

For values and resources potentially impacted off National Forest System lands, one of the most effective BAER strategies is its interagency coordination with local cooperators who assist affected businesses, homes, and landowners prepare for rain events. The Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) work together and coordinate with other federal, state and local agencies, and counties that assist private landowners in preparing for increased run-off and potential flooding.

Federal assistance to private landowners is administered by NRCS through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program (www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/landscape/ewpp/). NRCS and the Resource Conservation Districts work with local governments (sponsors) to implement emergency measures in the wake of natural disasters to safeguard human lives, property, and natural resources.

NRCS and local sponsors prepare damage survey reports for eligible sites on private lands adjacent to and downstream from affected 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 debris flows, and assist sponsors to implement recommended emergency measures (www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1045263.pdf).

Multiple agencies work with BAER teams and look at the full scope and scale of the situation to reduce the potential threats to human life and safety, and property; however, BAER emergency stabilization actions on federal lands cannot prevent all of the potential flooding or soil erosion impacts, especially after wildfires change the landscape.

It is important that residents take steps to protect themselves and their property from flooding and debris flows:

- For their **safety**, communities need to monitor local weather reports and public safety bulletins, local road closures, emergency notifications, weather alerts, follow local county and city advisories, and act accordingly.
- Use a "weather radio" or smart phone "weather app" that monitors "all hazards" alerts issued by the **NOAA-National Weather Service** (www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr/).
- **Prepare for rainstorms** by being prepared to evacuate if county or city emergency officials determine that flooding and mudflows are expected which could pose an increased threat to human life, safety, and property. Practice evacuations prior to real events.
- Know and be alert to environmental signs of **dangerous weather conditions** and be prepared to take action that can save lives.
- Understand that all drainages within and downstream of the burned areas can produce flooding.
- If you find yourself in a flood, climb to safety (**seek higher ground**).
- Even if the water appears shallow enough to cross, don't try it by vehicle or foot. Water hides dips in the road – worse yet, there may be no road left under the water as flooding can scour away the entire road surface and ground beneath the road.

Interagency Resources for Flood and Storm Preparedness and Emergency Information

Local Counties

The following local County Offices of Emergency Services and Management promotes preparedness through its emergency services programs to assist the public to prepare for, respond appropriately to, and quickly recover from natural emergencies that may impact county residents and visitors:

- Utah County Sheriff's Office:
www.utahcounty.gov/Dept/Sheriff/Media/PressReleaseArchiveDetails.asp?ID=186302
- Utah County Emergency Preparedness:
www.co.utah.ut.us/Dept2/Health/EmergencyPrep/allhaz.asp

State Agencies

The Utah Division of Emergency Management provides information about emergency preparedness, flood and storm preparation:

- dem.utah.gov/
- dem.utah.gov/hazards-and-mitigation/
- dem.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2015/02/Flooding-Outreach.pdf
- www.utah.gov/beready/family/flood.html

The Utah Division of Water Resources provides information to the public regarding water conditions:

- water.utah.gov/Links/StreamCondition.html

Other Federal Agencies

The US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) coordinates its Emergency Management program with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and local governments to provide engineering services to respond to national and natural disasters in order to minimize damages and help in recovery efforts. Public Law 84-99 enables the Corps to assist state and local authorities in flood fight activities and cost share in the repair of flood protection structures. Public Law 93-288 authorizes FEMA to task the Corps with disaster recovery missions under the Federal Response Plan

www.usace.army.mil/Missions/EmergencyOperations/NationalResponseFramework/FloodControl.aspx.

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 Flood Smart at www.floodsmart.gov/. Other flood preparedness information is available at www.ready.gov/floods.

The US Geological Survey (USGS) provides "water watch" internet tools and flood information for the State of Utah:

- waterdata.usgs.gov/ut/nwis/current/?type=flow
- waterwatch.usgs.gov/new/index.php?r=ut&m=real
- waterwatch.usgs.gov/new/index.php?r=ut&id=flood

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: www.weather.gov/slc/.*

Bald Mtn-Pole Creek Post-Fire BAER Assessment information is available at <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/6236/>.

