

## Colville National Forest

**Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER)**

## Post-Fire BAER Assessment and Implementation



BAER Information: (415) 881-1871

**COLVILLE NF POST-FIRE BAER ASSESSMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION EFFORTS**

Before the 2015 wildfires burning on the Colville National Forest (NF) were fully contained, Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) assessment teams were established by the forest to analyze post-fire conditions of the burned watersheds for the following wildfires:

- Kettle Complex (Stickpin Fire, Renner Fire, and Graves Mountain Fire)
- Northstar Fire (18,000 acres burned Colville NF lands)
- Kaniksu Complex (Tower Fire, Grease Creek Fire, Baldy Fire)

BAER assessments analyze post-fire effects on the burned soils and watersheds and determine whether there are potential emergency threats and impacts to potential downstream values-at-risk related to human life and safety, property and infrastructure such as roads, trails, and campgrounds, natural resources such as soil productivity, water quality and critical plant and wildlife habitat, and cultural resources.

Wildfires can increase the risk of flooding, erosion, and sedimentation. Other potential hazards include debris flow, reduced water quality, invasive plants, or falling trees and rocks. The loss of natural vegetative cover allows water to runoff across bare soils with increased velocity. Fire also induces water repellency of varying degrees, reducing water infiltration, and increasing runoff.

BAER reports include team assessments of pre- and post-fire responses for each of the burned watersheds within each wildfire, areas of concern, values-at-risk, and recommended short-term emergency stabilization treatments and measures.

After BAER assessment reports are reviewed and finalized, the BAER team recommended emergency stabilization treatments and measures are funded by the Forest Service regional offices and depending upon the requested funding amount, Washington Office.

Once the funding is received by the forest, BAER implementation teams were organized to install the recommended emergency stabilization treatments and measures before significant winter storms arrive over the burned areas.

BAER emergency treatments such as road and trail drainage stabilization, mulching to reduce downstream peak flows, hazard tree removal in areas where implementation work is being performed, and installation of safety and burned area information signage in hazardous areas are implemented to help reduce loss of soils and threats to values at risk downstream. BAER treatments also manage for the spread of noxious weeds that may have been introduced during fire suppression activities. Forest closures within and downstream of the burned areas may continue as a recommendation by the BAER assessment team where it is not safe for the public to enter, or in areas that require recovery of critical natural resources without additional impacts.

During the BAER assessment and implementation phases, interagency coordination is necessary where downstream values-at-risk could be impacted by post-fire flooding and debris flows occurring on private lands. BAER team analyses and findings are shared with the US Geological Survey, National Weather Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Washington State departments and divisions, local tribes, and counties. NRCS works with local counties, cities, and communities to evaluate potential post-fire threats to downstream private home and landowners, and businesses.

As BAER emergency stabilization treatments are approved and funded, the BAER assessment report, assessment summary, soil burn severity map, and treatment implementation status, for each of the above-mentioned 2015 Colville NF wildfires/complexes, will be posted on InciWeb at [inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4646/](http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4646/).

**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 scar. Flash flooding may occur quickly during heavy rain events. Current weather and emergency notifications can be found at the **National Weather Service, Spokane Office** (<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/otx/>) website.*

Colville NF Post-Fire BAER assessment & implementation information is available at <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4646/>.

