



Central Washington 2012 Wildfires Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Assessment Update – October 6, 2012

BAER Information: (208) 398-3348

Current Fire Status

- Okanogan Complex: 6,169 acres (95% containment) (100 miles north of Wenatchee, WA)
- Goat Fire: 7,378 acres (90% containment) (60 miles northeast of Wenatchee, WA)
- Wenatchee Complex: 56,478 acres (60% containment) (2 miles west of Wenatchee, WA)
- Table Mountain Fire: 42,312 acres (100% containment) (25 miles southwest of Wenatchee, WA)
- Yakima Complex: 2,300 acres (90% containment) (40 miles southwest of Wenatchee, WA)

Background Information

- The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (NF) assembled an Interagency Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) assessment team to gather information, conduct an analysis, determine the post-fire condition of the burned watersheds, and recommend emergency stabilization treatments for the recent Central Washington wildfires.
- Wildfire can increase the risk of flooding, erosion and sedimentation, debris flow, reduced water quality, invasive plants, and falling trees and rocks.
- The interagency team of specialists, including hydrologists, soil scientists, archaeologists, foresters, engineers, biologists, and geographic information specialists, is comprised of resource specialists from the USDA Forest Service (USFS), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), US Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the State of Washington (WA).
- The BAER team will generate a report that will identify immediate and emergency actions needed to address post-fire risks to life, property, cultural and natural resources.
- The BAER team report will contain an assessment of watershed pre- and post-fire response information, areas of concern, values-at-risk, and recommended short-term emergency stabilization treatments for Forest Service land that burned during the recent wildfires.

Key BAER Messages

- The communities surrounding the Okanogan-Wenatchee NF live in an environment where the canyons within the burned area can produce flooding and debris flows.
- For their safety, communities need to monitor local weather reports and public safety bulletins, along with local road closures, emergency notifications, weather alerts, follow local county advisories, and act accordingly.
- Multiple agencies, including the US Forest Service and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), are working together and coordinating with local interagency cooperators who assist affected land and property owners prepare for rain events.

BAER Team Assessment Progress

- BAER specialists began their initial field work to analyze the post-fire conditions of the burned watersheds within the Okanogan-Wenatchee NF for the Peavine, Canyon, Poison, and Cashmere fires.

- Satellite imagery and field reconnaissance are used to map soil burn severity and assess watershed conditions and response from the wildfires.
- Watershed response will be used to identify values-at-risk and potential treatments that could reduce negative impacts.
- On Friday, October 5, the U.S. Forest Service Remote Sensing Application Center (RSAC) in Salt Lake City, Utah, provided the BAER team with an initial Burned Area Reflectance Classification (BARC) satellite imagery map.
- The BAER team will ground truth and finalize a Soil Burn Severity map for the wildfires.
- This map is essential to begin the modeling of hydrologic response and an analysis of the burned watersheds.
- The BAER team will soon identify basic values-at-risk (VAR) within and downstream of the burned areas and further refine the VAR through its field work and interagency discussions.
- The BAER team is communicating and coordinating with NRCS, NOAA, the State of Washington, affected counties, local municipal government agencies, communities, and other interagency cooperators whose authorities include flood control, roads, water supply, wildlife, recreation, and structural safety inspections.

Interagency Cooperators Key Information

- NRCS is working cooperatively with the counties, cities and communities adjacent to and downstream from the burned areas to evaluate potential threats to specific businesses, homes, and landowners.
- Federal assistance to private landowners is the primary responsibility of the NRCS through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program (<http://www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp.html>).
- Chelan County is sponsoring a EWP grant and will be working with NRCS to assist private landowners with damage survey reports and recommended emergency measures (http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1045263.pdf).
- NRCS is coordinating a workshop with Washington State University that will be held before the end of October that will give private landowners and business owners more information regarding what actions they can take to protect themselves and their property.
- Additional information for that workshop will be shared with the public when the date and location is determined.

Remarks: Central Washington BAER Team information is available at <http://inciweb.org/incident/3292/>. Also, follow us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/OkaWenNF>.

