

980 WILDLAND FIRE REPAIR AND REHABILITATION

981 WILDFIRE REPAIR AND REHABILITATION POLICY

A. OBJECTIVE

The objective of wildland fire repair and rehabilitation is to provide for prompt action following wildfire and associated fire suppression activities to minimize, to the extent practical:

1. Loss of soil and on-site productivity.
2. Discourage the spread of noxious weeds
3. Deterioration of water quality and adverse change in runoff characteristics.
4. Threats to life and property, both on-site and off-site.

B. WILDFIRE REPAIR AND REHABILITATION GUIDELINES

1. Implement fire repair and rehabilitation actions when it is necessary to protect soil and water resources from loss or unacceptable downstream damage.
2. All actions must be effective and feasible to install or apply before the season of anticipated greatest impact occurs.
3. All actions must be environmentally and socially acceptable and compatible with current and long-term land use.

C. RESPONSIBILITY

1. The assigned Line Officer is responsible for implementing the Wildfire Repair and Rehabilitation Policy on areas of DNRC direct fire protection and State/County Cooperative Fire Protection responsibility.
2. The Incident Commander is directly responsible for recognizing the need for repair and rehabilitation of the fire area and is responsible for implementing this policy with approval from the Line Officer.

D. DEFINITIONS

1. **Direct Protection:** Land that has been assigned to a recognized wildland fire protection agency and in which the landowner is paying a fee for that protection.

There are two types of areas in which direct protection is provided:
Montana Forest Fire Districts
Agreement Areas (Commonly referred to as Affidavit
Units)

2. **State – County Cooperative Protection:** All State and private land in a county that is not protected under the direct protection program.
3. **Wildland Fire Repair damages** (Impacts resulting from wildland Fire Suppression activities) Physical damages requiring repair work resulting from fire suppression activities. Examples may include placing water bars to prevent soil erosion in the fireline or grass seeding an area impacted by a fire camp.
4. **Non-Suppression Rehabilitation Damages** Physical damages caused by the fire itself, not including the impacts of suppression actions. (Note: Fire Suppression funds cannot be used to pay for activities associated with this type of damage.)
5. **Project Supervisor**--The person assigned by the Line Officer to provide direct supervision for the implementation of wildland fire repair and rehabilitation activities. This person's involvement will not terminate until all repair and rehabilitation measures have been implemented.
6. **Rehabilitation Specialist**--A technical specialist position in the Planning Section filled when requested by the Incident Commander/Planning Section Chief. This person completes a preliminary Fire Area Survey, reporting on Suppression caused and Non-Suppression caused damages and the need for a Rehabilitation Team.
7. **Watershed Emergency**--A watershed emergency exists when a natural occurrence causes a sudden impairment of a watershed that creates an imminent threat to life or property.
8. **Preliminary Area Survey**--An assessment made by the technical specialist (rehabilitation specialist) of fire suppression-caused damages and the need for rehabilitation of Non-suppression wildland fire caused damages.
9. **Fire Area Survey**--An assessment made by the specialist or rehabilitation team that locates and identifies watershed emergencies and treatment measures.

10. **Fire Area Damage Report**—Summary of fire Suppression and Non-Suppression damages and recommended actions, based on fire Area Surveys or information obtained from the Incident Management Team (IMT). The report should be of appropriate length and detail based on size and damages caused by the fire. The Line Officer will consult with the IMT and appropriate specialist to determine if a report for a particular fire is required.

E. COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

1. Most DNRC direct protection and State/County Cooperative Fire Protection involves areas of mixed ownership. To increase the efficiency of wildfire repair for Suppression caused damages and rehabilitation efforts for Non-Suppression fire damage, DNRC will encourage coordination of wildfire rehabilitation and repair efforts by promoting interagency standards and operating procedures. In addition, where private property is involved in the rehabilitation and repair plan, a landowner briefing should be conducted that includes NRCS, the County Weed Supervisor and local extension agent for noxious weed and rehabilitation exchange.

F. REPAIR OF WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION DAMAGES

Repair of physical damages **resulting from the fire suppression effort** on DNRC direct fire protection (Includes Exchanged Fire Protection Lands) is as follows:

1. **Application**
 - a. Repair of wildland fire Suppression caused damage is applicable to wildfire of all sizes on all ownerships within DNRC direct protection and State/County Assist Cooperative Fire Protection.
 - b. All wildland fire suppression repair work requires Line Officer approval.
 - c. For other than emergency measures, landowners will be consulted prior to implementing wildland fire suppression repair actions and rehabilitation actions to address Non-Suppression fire damages.
 - d. Repair of wildfire suppression caused damages is a part of the suppression effort and should be completed as soon as possible but making allowance for environmental and other factors to ensure that the fire suppression work is completed successfully. (For example, one factor to consider is soil moisture and temperature when grass

seeding. This action should be delayed until proper conditions occur on the site.)

2. **Typical Fireline Repair**

- a. Construction of waterbars in firelines.
- b. Removal of berm along machine-constructed firelines.
- c. Debris pulled onto rehab area if available and appropriate.
- d. Grass seeding of firelines and fire camp area.
- e. Grading and repair of impacted roadways.
- f. Emergency repair of damaged bridges, fence, gates and culverts.
- g. Weed management measures to address fire suppression actions that may have introduced weeds on the fire site.

3. **Funding**

Costs incurred to repair wildland fire suppression damages are charged directly to the fire where these actions occur on direct and State/County Cooperative Protection fires.

G. NON-SUPPRESSION DAMAGES

Rehabilitation of physical damages **caused by the fire itself** (not fire suppression caused damages) on DNRC direct fire protection and State/County Cooperative Protection is as follows:

1. **Application**

- a. Rehabilitation of Non-Suppression damages may be applicable where one or more of the following conditions are met:
 - 1) A watershed emergency exists.
 - 2) Appropriate funding sources from federal, state and local government are available for Non-Suppression rehabilitation. Fire suppression funds are not available for Non-Suppression damage rehabilitation.

- b. Physical damages caused by suppression activities are **not** eligible for rehabilitation as Non-Suppression damages.
- c. Landowners will be consulted before rehabilitation of Non-Suppression damages is started. All efforts should be made to ensure that the Agencies and Landowners reach consensus on what rehabilitation work should be done.
- d. Rehabilitation of Non-Suppression damages on federal lands is the responsibility of the appropriate federal agency.

2. **Typical Non-Suppression Rehabilitation Measures**

- a. Grass seed intensely burned areas.
- b. Removal of downed woody debris from stream channels.
- c. Installation of trash racks in streams.
- d. Installation of log erosion barriers.
- e. Alternate grazing, feed and stock moving.
- f. Stock water systems.
- g. Internal fence replacement.
- h. Culvert enlargement.

3. **Possible Funding Sources**

- a. Natural Resources Conservation Service Emergency Watershed Protection Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Farm Service Agency program funds, DNRC Grant Program and Environmental Contingency Funding.
- b. Appropriate federal agency for funding of rehabilitation on federal land.

H. WILDLAND FIRE REPAIR REHABILITATION OF DAMAGES ON STATE-ASSISTED COUNTY FIRES

1. **Responsibility**

- a. Wildland fire suppression and Non-Suppression damages are the responsibility of the affected county. DNRC will assist the county with fire suppression repair work.

- b. DNRC ownership involved in county-assisted fires may be treated with wildland fire suppression and Non-Suppression measures similar to those under direct suppression. The source of funds for all Non-Suppression work will be **other than fire suppression funding**.

2. **Cooperation**

A Rehabilitation Specialist and supporting organization will be available as needed and requested to make recommendations on county fires for the entire fire or on DNRC ownership only.

I. NOXIOUS WEED PREVENTION

1. All grass seed to be applied for rehabilitation purposes must be certified noxious weed free. A copy of seed tags showing seed composition will be retained to indicate noxious weed-free seed was applied.
2. Fire Suppression and Non-Suppression actions should consider measures which minimize potential for weed introduction and spread. Examples include the use of weed-free straw bales where erosion control sediment traps are used; wash wheeled or tracked equipment if suspected of transporting weeds.
3. When planning rehabilitation of Non-Suppression fire damages, take steps to minimize weed introduction and spread.
 - a. Identify areas where weeds previously occurred. In areas where spread of weeds is a concern, county weed boards may be able to supply information and maps on where noxious weeds occur in the fire area.
 - b. Consider landowner objectives and resources for weed control. The landowner will be responsible for weed management on their ownership.

SPECIAL NOTE: ALL FIRE SUPPRESSION EQUIPMENT, FIRE SUPPORT EQUIPMENT AND OFF-ROAD VEHICLES WILL BE VISUALLY INSPECTED AND WASHED IF NEEDED TO REMOVE NOXIOUS WEED SEEDS. THIS INSPECTION SHOULD BE PART OF THE VEHICLE SAFETY INSPECTION CHECKLIST (OF-296) COMPLETED ON ALL VEHICLES PRIOR TO AND AFTER INCIDENT ASSIGNMENTS.

J. ASSESSMENT AND SURVEY OF SUPPRESSION AND NON-SUPPRESSION DAMAGES

1. **Implementation**

- a. A Rehabilitation Specialist will be mobilized **as needed** to conduct a preliminary fire area survey for DNRC direct protection and State/County Cooperative Fire Protection fires.
- 1) Criteria for the Incident Commander to use in determining when to request a Rehabilitation Specialist are:
- Size of Fire
 - Fuel Types and Loading (e.g., Grass and Shrub vs. Timber)
 - Intensity of Burn
 - Proximity to Stream Courses
 - Steepness of Slope and Erosivity of Soils
 - Downstream Water Uses (e.g., Municipal/High Value Fishery vs. In-Stream Stock Water)
 - Extent of Suppression Activities.
- b. The Rehabilitation Specialist is a technical specialist in the Planning Section.
- c. The Rehabilitation Specialist will review the fire and make recommendations on:
- 1) Extent and repair of wildland fire suppression damages.
- 2) Occurrence of non-suppression wildland fire damages and the need for a rehabilitation team and a fire area survey.
- d. On fires where a Rehabilitation Specialist is not called, wildland fire suppression damages and non-suppression fire damages will remain the direct responsibility of the Line Officer. All repair and rehabilitation actions must be approved by the Line Officer.

2. **Damage caused by wildland fire suppression actions**

- a. For fires with no significant wildland fire suppression damages that need repair work, the Rehabilitation Specialist is released at containment or before.

- b. For fires with wildland fire suppression damages:
- 1) The Rehabilitation Specialist reviews the fire and prepares a report with recommendations.
 - 2) The report submitted to the Planning Section Chief will consist of written memos and detailed maps.
 - 3) Prompt reporting is essential in order to utilize equipment and manpower still on the fire. Interim reports are encouraged to better utilize available resources.
 - 4) The final report prescribing fire suppression repair measures will be completed within the time period specified by the Line Officer not to exceed 30 days after containment of the fire.
 - 5) The final plan to repair wildland fire suppression damages will include all the cost and a timeline for the completion of work outlined in the plan. It is preferred that all financial obligations will be completed prior to the closeout of the incident. The Line Officer may authorize approval of financial obligations after the closeout of the incident based on local conditions and special needs such as resource availability.
 - 6) Upon approval of the plan to repair wildland fire suppression damages by the Line Officer, the Incident Commander or their representative supervises completion of the repair measures.

3. **NON-SUPPRESSION WILDLAND FIRE DAMAGES**

- a. Non-Suppression wildland fire damages repair Team Organization--A team of technical specialists (Note: Federal Agencies refer to this team as a Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation Team, BAER) is mobilized to complete the fire area survey and report. This will be done only after a Rehabilitation Specialist has identified the potential for Non-Suppression fire damages, and the Line Officer has reviewed the need for this type of resource mobilization.

1) **Skills Needed**

The makeup of the Non-Suppression fire damages team will vary with the size and intensity of burn, the

topography and the land use. The following disciplines are a sample of those that may be utilized:

Team Leader
Soil Scientist
Hydrologist
Geologist
Plant Materials Specialist
Range Specialist
Reforestation Specialist
Fish and/or Wildlife Biologist
Economist
Land Office Liaison
Clerical Support

2) **Selection of Teams**

- a) The Non-Suppression fire damages Team may be formed at the Area or Department level or utilizing interagency resources, depending on the need and location of available skills.
- b) The Trust Lands Management Division Administrator shall select potential DNRC team members and alternates with the needed skills from within the department prior to fire season.
- c) Team Leaders and members will be notified prior to the fire season.

3) **Position in the Overhead Structure**

- a) The Team Leader will be responsible to the Planning Section Chief.
- b) Team members will be responsible to the Team Leader.
- c) The Rehabilitation Specialist will be assigned to the Non-Suppression fire damages Team.
- d) Pre-Season Planning: A pre-season planning meeting may be held as needed to discuss responsibilities and operations matters.

b. Burned Area Survey Report and Prescriptions

- 1) Non-Suppression wildland fire damages

- a) In an effort to promote interagency cooperation, the definitions, guidelines, and cost effectiveness analysis in Chapters 20 - 40 (2-4) of the USFS Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation Handbook (FSH 2509.13), will be used as a reference point.
- b) The Fire Area Survey Report will be completed within three days of control of the fire.
- c) The rehabilitation measures will be completed under the supervision of the Line Officer.

K. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- 1. A field review and evaluation of Non-Suppression damages rehabilitation efforts will be completed following one growing season. The evaluation will be coordinated between the Line Officer and the Rehabilitation Specialist. Additional field reviews in subsequent years may be desired.
- 2. Results and recommendations will be documented and submitted to the Line Officer.

982 PRE-REHABILITATION POLICY GUIDE

If the Incident Commander or Planning Section Chief recognizes a need for Non-Suppression damage rehabilitation measures, with concurrence from the Line Officer, a Technical Specialist position in the Planning Section may be filled with a Rehabilitation Specialist.

The Technical (Rehabilitation) Specialist reviews the fire.

- A. The Technical (Rehabilitation) Specialist reviews the fire for one of the following scenarios:
 - 1. Rehabilitation Specialist finds **no** significant Non-Suppression fire-caused damages and no significant wildland fire suppression damages. Then, the Rehabilitation Specialist demobs at the containment of the fire or before.
 - 2. Rehabilitation Specialist finds wildland fire suppression damages as a result of suppression actions.
 - a. Rehabilitation Specialist calls for assistance as needed depending on fire size, land use, etc.

- b. Rehabilitation Specialist prepares report with repair recommendations to repair fire suppression caused damages within 1 day after containment of the fire.
 - c. The Line Officer reviews the repair recommendations and with input from the Incident Commander, decides whether or not to authorize repair activities.
 - 1) The Line Officer decides **no**.
 - a) Revise the repair plan.
 - 2) The Line Officer decides **Yes**.
 - a) Rehabilitation Specialist supervises completion of repair work.
 - b) Repair measures should be completed or contracted to be completed before incident is returned to local unit.
3. The Rehabilitation Specialist **finds** significant Non-Suppression wildland **fire-caused Damages**.
- a. Call for a team of specialist.
 - b. All work by the Team is coordinated with Rehabilitation Specialist on Non-Suppression fire damages.
 - c. Rehabilitation Team completes a fire Area Survey.
 - d. Rehabilitation Team completes report and prescriptions within 3 days of control of the fire and submits them to the Planning Section Chief. Funding sources for all rehabilitation activities must be identified in the report.
 - e. Line Officer decides whether or not to approve the rehabilitation plan.
 - 1) Line Officer decides **no**.
 - a) Revise rehabilitation plan.
 - 2) The Line Officer decides **yes**.
 - a) Team Leader coordinates rehabilitation with project supervisor.

- b) Rehabilitation measures completed or contracted to be completed before incident is returned to local unit.

983 AVAILABLE LANDOWNER REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE

The following assistance programs or methods may be available to landowners who have lost fences, cattle, hay, pasture, etc., from fire. Landowners should make their initial contact with their local conservation district. Conservation districts are organized statewide, often following county boundaries. There are 58 conservation districts in Montana, and all have working mutual agreements with the United States Department of Agriculture and the State of Montana. The Montana Association of Conservation Districts office is located in Helena.

- A. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which is now part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and other federal agencies offer disaster assistance in several forms. This assistance is available following a Governor's emergency or disaster declaration and a request for a Presidential declaration. If the President approves the request and declares a "Major Disaster," then federal assistance is in the form of low interest loans to cover damages. The Farm Service Agency (FSA), U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Small business Administration (SBA) offer low interest loans to eligible individuals, farmers and businesses to repair or replace damage property and personal belongings not covered by insurance. This assistance is different than the Fire management Assistance Grant Program (FMAGP), which does **not** require a Governor's emergency or disaster declaration but **does** require the State's request for a fire management assistance declaration be approved by FEMA.
- B. **FARM SERVICE AGENCY (FSA) PROGRAM AVAILABLE UNDER SECRETARIAL DECLARATION (USDA Secretary of Agriculture).**

Following a request by the county commissioners submitted through, and supported by the Governor, the state must be declared a disaster area by the USDA Secretary of Agriculture. When the disaster is declared by the Secretary of Agriculture, the designation makes farmers and ranchers eligible for FSA emergency farm loans if they have losses caused by the declared disaster in the crop year of the year the disaster was declared. The losses cannot be determined until harvest time. The disaster declaration by the Secretary of Agriculture does not trigger other farm programs administered by FSA.

C. FARM SERVICE AGENCY PROGRAMS AVAILABLE DUE TO NATURAL DISASTERS.

The USDA Farm Service Agency provides special programs such as the Emergency Conservation Program (ECP), which provides emergency funding to agricultural producers who have suffered severe damage to their farmland as a result of natural disaster. These disasters may include flooding, fire, drought, etc. Local FSA county committees, with concurrence by the FSA state committee and approval by the National FSA office, are authorized to implement ECP funding for eligible producers within their specific county. Other programs such as the Livestock Assistance Program (LAP) and Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) are ad hoc programs implemented by Congress and are available in emergency situations when funding is available.

D. NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS) has the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) available for local sponsors to use to aid in recovery work. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical and financial assistance to install measures that reduce post-fire damage. The measures are intended to reduce threats to life or property, retard runoff, restore capacity of waterways, prevent flooding and/or soil erosion, and reduce damage from sediment and debris. The removal of debris deposited by the disaster that is a health or safety hazard can be a part of such measures as well. In addition to the EWP program, NRCS offers conservation information and expertise to individual homeowners or landowners seeking technical assistance in their rehabilitation efforts.

E. MONTANA DNRC FIRE REHABILITATION SERVICES

1. **Service Forestry Bureau Programs**

a. Forest Practices

- 1) Slash
- 2) Streamside Management Zones (SMZ)
- 3) Best Management Practices (BMP)

b. Forest Health

- 1) Entomologist
- 2) Insect and disease

c. Tree Seedling Nursery

d. Community Forestry

- e. Forest Stewardship Program
 - 1) Education
 - 2) Cost Share
- f. Private Forestry Assistance
 - 1) Non-Industrial Private Forest Landowners (NIPF)

2. **What DNRC Can Do SPECIFICALLY**

- a. On the ground technical assistance.
 - 1) Half-day Visit
 - a) Assess fire impacts.
 - b) Provide mitigation recommendations.
 - c) Help with timber salvage.
- b. Entomologist
 - 1) On site visit.
 - 2) Identify potential post fire insect problems and mitigation.
- c. DNRC State Nursery
 - 1) Provide conifer seedlings for spring planting at current rates.
- d. Cost-Share Assistance
 - 1) Forest Land Enhancement Program
 - 2) 75/25 Cost-Share
 - 3) Forest Rehabilitation
 - a) Focus on Erosion, SMZs and BMPs

Contact Your Local Service Forester

DNRC Service Forestry Web Site:

www.dnrc.mt.gov/forestry/assistance