

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Burns District Office  
28910 Hwy 20 West  
Hines, Oregon 97738

In Reply  
Refer To:

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Director (932)

FROM: District Manager

SUBJECT: Sheepshead Complex (M-381) Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Plan

Attached is the Sheepshead Complex (M-381) Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Plan.

If you have any questions, please call Miles Brown at (541) 573-4425.

Attachment (as stated)

Sheepshead Complex  
Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Plan  
and  
Environmental Assessment  
OR-027-02-040

On August 9, 2001, the Sheepshead Complex began with ignition of the Sheepshead Fire. This fire burned 33,300 acres of land administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), 5,900 acres of land administered by the State of Oregon and 2,300 acres of private land. The Stonehouse fire was ignited in the afternoon of the following day, August 10, 2001. This fire burned 8,500 acres of land administered by the BLM and 950 acres of private land.

I. PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose and need for this proposal is to protect for natural rehabilitation approximately 9,450 acres within the Stonehouse Fire and 33,30 acres within the Sheepshead Fire.

The rehabilitation of these fires requires construction of 2 mile of temporary 3-wire fence and 5 miles of permanent 3-wire fence. The temporary fence will be constructed along a cat line on the south boundary of the Stonehouse Fire. The permanent fence will be constructed on the west boundary of the Sheepshead Fire, approximately 100 feet of the east side of the Folly Farm Road. The temporary fence will protect the Stonehouse fire for at least two growing seasons, or until objectives are met. This fence will be removed once objectives are met.

No portions of the area require seeding to rehabilitate.

II. RELATIONSHIP TO PLANNING

The Andrews Management Framework Plan (MFP) completed in 1982 is the current land use plan for this area. A Resource Management Plan (RMP) is being developed to replace the Andrews MFP. A draft RMP is scheduled to be issued in March 2003.

III. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Proposed Action

The proposed action is designed to meet rehabilitation objectives:

1. To protect the burned area from livestock grazing.
2. To allow native plant community to naturally revegetate.
3. To allow the burned area to return to a viable, native plant community with good vigor and composition.

4. To reduce the risk of accelerated erosion.
5. To reduce the risk of infestation of cheatgrass and noxious weeds.

The proposed action would be to construct approximately 5 miles of new temporary 4-strand barbed wire fence, with the bottom strand smooth and to Bureau of Land Management (BLM) standards in the Blitzen River WSA (2-86E). The fence will be located in T. 33 S., R. 32 E., Section 36 and T. 33 S., R. 32½ E., Sections 26, 32, 33, and 34. This would provide a minimum of 2 year's rest from grazing, thereby allowing rehabilitation.

The temporary fence on the Stonehouse Fire would be removed once monitoring determines that the rehabilitation objectives have been met. Under normal conditions, objectives should be met in a maximum of 5 years. If fencing does not occur, unacceptably high utilization levels are expected from livestock, wild horses, and big game in the burned area.

Fence materials would be transported to the site on 4-wheel ATVs, travel along fenceline would be kept to a minimum. Solid green or grey posts would be used.

B. Alternatives

1. No Action Alternative

There would be no protection fence constructed. Grazing animals would be attracted to the area. Unacceptably high utilization levels from livestock is expected in the burned area.

IV. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

A. Topography and Climate

The area is in the Dry Creek drainage on Steens Mountain. It contains shallow to moderate rolling slopes ranging from 0 to 30 percent. The elevation ranges from approximately 5,650 feet to 5,800 feet. The area receives 12 to 14 inches of precipitation with most of the precipitation occurring in the winter in the form of snow.

B. Soils

Soils on the site are variable. On the toe slope soils are moderately deep loams to sandy loams. However, soils become shallow to very shallow loamy skeletal as elevation and slope increases. The soils, derived from alluvium, are deep loamy skeletal soils sometimes having a cemented layer below 20-30 inches.

C. Vegetation

Vegetation on the Stonehouse Fire is a mixture of native rangeland and seeded rangeland. The upper 1/3 of the slope is native rangeland consisting of mountain big sagebrush, bluebunch wheatgrass with moderate encroachment of western juniper. The lower 2/3 of the slope was seeded to crested wheatgrass in 1968. The seeding had moderate to light invasion of Wyoming big sagebrush. Cheatgrass was not a dominant component of the plant community, but was present at low levels throughout the seeding.

Vegetation on the Sheepshead Fire complex mosaic of native plant communities. Uplands were dominated by Wyoming big sagebrush with a variety native grasses and forbs. Bluebunch wheatgrass, Thruver's needlegrass, Sandberg's bluegrass, and bottlebrush squirreltail comprise the majority of the grass layer. Hawksbeard, arrowleaf balsmroot, Biddle's lupine, Agosoris, and a variety of native annual forbs are also common components of the plant community. Cheatgrass was present at low levels. There are some playettes within the burned area. The vegetated areas are dominated by silver sagebrush. Only small portions of these playettes burned and should be revegetated rapidly by the sprouting nature of silver sagebrush.

D. Watershed

The burned area had a diverse vegetation cover of big sagebrush, low sagebrush, western juniper, Sandberg bluegrass, squirreltail, Idaho fescue, bluebunch wheatgrass, and crested wheatgrass.

The native rangelands should respond positively to burning due to pre-burn condition and provided protection from livestock grazing for a minimum of two growing seasons following the fire.

E. Wildlife

The two burned areas are winter, late fall and early spring range for mule deer and pronghorn. The upper portions of the Stonehouse Fire may periodically be used by bighorn sheep and Rocky Mountain Elk. Browse species establishment, as well as perennial grasses, are important for the survival of these animals during the spring. Bald eagle (Threatened) and Peregrine falcon (Endangered) migrate through the area. Swainson's hawk and ferruginous hawk, both BLM sensitive species, are present at different times in the area.

The lower elevation areas of the Sheepshead Fire have been classified as winter range for sage grouse.

F. Livestock Grazing Management

The Mann Lake Allotment is primarily used in the early spring by Mann Lake Ranch. The allotment is in an improved category. The grazing system for this allotment is an adaptive management system.

The Pollock Allotment is grazed in the winter by the Juniper Ranch and this allotment is in the improved category.

G. Wilderness

Public lands east of the Folly Farm Road within the fire perimeter, are within Sheepshead and Health Lake Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs). Portions of the Stonehouse Fire area within the Lower Stonehouse WSA and a very small portion (less than 1 acre) Stonehouse WSA. The BLM is mandated to house maintain, protect, and enhance wilderness values of these areas. Surface-disturbing activities are limited to activities that would clearly benefit wilderness values. No activities in this plan will be conducted within the boundaries of any wilderness study area.

H. Recreation and Visual Resource Management

The area of the Sheepshead Complex provides good opportunities for primitive forms of recreation. Hiking, camping, hunting, and sightseeing are activities most commonly conducted, but use is light in the area of the burn. The site is in a Visual Resource Management (VRM) Class II area. This requires modifications to the natural scenery not to be evident by a casual observer.

I. Cultural Resources

The area may have potential for cultural sites and should be surveyed for archaeological values before any surface-disturbing activities are allowed.

J. Wild Horses

The proposed rehabilitation area is within the Heath Creek/Sheepshead Wild Horse Herd Management Area.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The following critical elements are either not present or not affected by the proposed action or the alternative: floodplains, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Native American religious concerns, prime or unique farmlands, hazardous substances or solid waste.

A. Proposed Action

The proposed action is to construct 2 miles of temporary drift fence and 5 miles of permanent protective fence to prevent livestock from grazing the burned site for a minimum of 2 growing seasons. The fence would allow vegetation to recover without impacts from livestock grazing.

1. Soils

The alluvial soils would have potential for producing a more diverse vegetative community as a result of fencing and protecting the burned area. Two growing seasons of protection from livestock grazing would lessen the hazard of accelerated soil erosion.

2. Vegetation

The construction of the temporary protective fence would help native plant communities to recover without further stress from livestock grazing.

Grazing by antelope, deer, wild horses, and small herbivores would continue. Rest from livestock grazing would occur the first two growing seasons (2002 and 2003), allowing for natural recovery. These diverse native communities would benefit a myriad of animal species.

3. Watershed

The two growing seasons of protection from livestock grazing would allow the maximum recovery of the vegetation cover. The risk of accelerated erosion would be reduced by allowing vegetation to regrow from the burn. The alluvial areas recommended for seeding would have a perennial vegetation cover to protect the soil surface.

4. Livestock Grazing Management

The burned area would be rested for two growing seasons. This would reduce the amount of livestock use allowed within portions of the Mann Lake and Pollock Allotments

The impact of fencing livestock from these areas would result in temporary nonuse of approximately 600 AUMs on the burned areas for the Mann Lake Allotment.

The impact of fencing livestock from the Road Pasture of the Pollock Allotment would result in temporary nonuse of approximately 900 AUMs on the burned areas of the Pollock Allotment.

5. Wilderness

The fences will allow recovery to occur within the WSAs affected by the burn by natural processes without the influence of human activity.

6. Recreation and Visual Resource Management

By restoring diverse native plant communities and lessening impacts of the annual cheatgrass range, visual resources would be improved. Recreation potential would be improved by lessening the fire hazard and providing improved habitat for wildlife species.

7. Cultural Resources

The area would require a survey before any ground-disturbing activities would be allowed. No negative impacts to significant cultural resources would be allowed.

8. Wild Horses

Wild horse movement would be affected by the proposed fence.

9. Wildlife

There would be short-term impacts to wildlife during fence construction. Sage grouse use the area during late fall, winter, early spring. There would be no impact on bald eagles, American peregrine falcons, Swainson's hawk or ferruginous hawk.

Construction of the 3-wire fence to BLM standards will reduce the impacts to mule deer and pronghorn.

B. No Action Alternative

1. Soils

There would be no rest periods from livestock grazing. Natural revegetation would allow much of the burn to have dominantly an annual vegetation cover, no protection from grazing, and would increase the probability of accelerated soil erosion.

2. Vegetation

Perennial revegetation would be slow with spring/summer livestock grazing in uplands, and lower alluvial areas would likely revegetate as cheatgrass and Sandberg bluegrass. The area would be lacking in species richness and diversity. Noxious weeds and exotic species could also invade the area.

3. Watershed

Recovery of native vegetation cover would be at risk without initial protection from livestock grazing. Overall, the watershed would be less well-vegetated and subject to future storm and fire events.

4. Livestock Grazing Management

The burned area cannot be rested for a minimum of two growing seasons.

5. Wilderness

Native vegetative regrowth would be slower in occurring or may be permanently damaged, which would adversely impact the natural character of the wilderness landscape. Invasive weeds would likely be introduced if livestock concentrated on the burned area.

6. Recreation and Visual Resource Management

Depletion of natural vegetation on uplands and riparian areas, and establishment of annual vegetation would detract from the visual resources of the area. Recreation opportunities could be impacted by the absence of vegetation diversity resulting in reduced habitat potential for wildlife and less desirable area for hiking and camping.

7. Cultural Resources

There would be no impact on cultural resources.

VI. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Mann Lake Ranch  
Juniper Ranch  
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

VII. MONITORING

Objective of this monitoring is to determine the efficacy of our treatment methods, given environmental conditions, to reestablish vegetation similar to that which was present prior to the wildfire.

Weed Control

Baseline weed levels will be established in year 1 after the fire. Out year monitoring will observe trend in weed levels.

Erosion and Gully Monitoring

Cross section transect will be established in drainages to measure increase in erosion and gully. Photo points and aerial photo interpretation will also be used to measure erosion. Soil loss and changes in head cutting will be indicators of increased erosion.

Monitoring Results

The sharing of the monitoring information will be in the form of presentations at fire rehabilitation lessons learned meetings. The results of our EFR monitoring will be coordinated with the WO-220, EFR Coordinator.

This area is also monitored for trend, utilization, use supervision, function, and condition. The current monitoring systems also will help to evaluate if emergency fire rehabilitation objectives are met.

VIII. AWP SECTION (Include other funding sources)

See Attachment 1.

IX. MAPS

See Attachment 2.

X. COST/RISK ASSESSMENT

<u>Treatment</u>	<u>Cost</u>
New Temporary Fence Construction (Materials, Labor)	\$ 4,000
New Permanent Fence Construction (Materials, Labor)	\$ 15,000
All Other Costs (Administrative, Clearances, etc.)	\$ <u>15,750</u>
TOTAL	\$ 34,750

Probability of Rehabilitation Treatments Successfully Meeting Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Objectives

Treatments	Units	NA	%
New Temporary Protection Fence	2 miles		100
New Permanent Protection Fence	5 miles		100

XI. RISK OF RESOURCE VALUE LOSS OR DAMAGE

No Action - Treatments Not Implemented (check one)

Resource Value	NA	None	Low	Mid	High
Unacceptable Loss of Topsoil					X
Weed Invasion					X
Unacceptable Loss of Vegetation Diversity					X
Unacceptable Loss of Vegetation Structure					X
Unacceptable Disruption of Ecological Processes					X
Off-site Sediment Damage to Private Property			X		
Off-site Threats to Human Life		X			
Other					

Proposed Action (or Alternative) - Treatments Successfully Implemented (check one)

Resource Value	NA	None	Low	Mid	High
Unacceptable Loss of Topsoil			X		
Weed Invasion			X		
Unacceptable Loss of Vegetation Diversity			X		
Unacceptable Loss of Vegetation Structure			X		

## XII. EFR PROJECT SUMMARY

Sheepshead Complex M-381

Fire Name: Sheepshead Complex (Sheepshead Fire, Stonehouse Fire)

Fire Control Date: August ,

Total Acres Burned:

Sheepshead Fire: 41,500 ac

Stonehouse Fire: 9,450 ac

Acres BLM Burned:

Sheepshead Fire: 33,300 ac

Stonehouse Fire: 8,500 ac

Start of Rehabilitation: April 2002

Completion of Rehabilitation: July 2002

Miles of New Fence:

Temporary Protective Fence: 2 mi.

Permanent Protective Fence: 5 mi.

Miles of Fence Rebuilt: NA

Number of Soil/Watershed Structures: NA

Acres Reforestation: NA

Acres of Revegetation: NA

Acres of Burned Area Protected for Natural Regeneration: 50,950

Total Acres Rehabilitated: 50,950

Estimated Funding FY02: \$28,000

Estimated Funding FY03: \$ 2,250

Estimated Funding FY04: \$ 6,750

### XIII. SUMMARY

1. Are the risks to natural and private resources unacceptable if the rehabilitation treatments (proposed action and/or alternatives) are not implemented?

Yes       No      Rationale for answer: This area needs to be protected from grazing, to allow the burned area to recover.

2. Is the probability of success of the proposed treatments (proposed action and/or alternatives) acceptable given their costs?

Yes       No      Rationale for answer: Permittee will construct temporary protection fence at no cost to government.

3. Which approach will cost effectively and successfully attain the emergency fire rehabilitation objectives and, therefore, is recommended for implementation.

Proposed Action , Alternative(s) , or No Action , Rationale for answer: See rationale above.

### XIV. EA DECISION REPORT (Decision Record Rationale)

#### DECISION RECORD/RATIONALE

Title: Sheepshead Complex Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Plan

Background: The Sheepshead Complex fire is a combination of the Sheepshead Fire (M381) and the Stonehouse Fire (M391). The Sheepshead Fire was ignited by lighting on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2002, and the Stonehouse fire was ignited by lighting on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2002. Total acreage burned in the Sheepshead Complex was 50, 950 acres.

Decision: After consideration of the analysis of impacts and mitigating measures of the proposed action and alternative, my decision is to implement the proposed action as follows:

Sheepsheads Complex:

Stonehouse Fire: Construct 2 miles of new temporary protection fence to protect burn for at least two growing seasons. All mitigating measures listed in the EA will be implemented. Total funding for the Stonehouse Fire is \$ 13,375.

Sheepshead Fire: Construct 5 miles of new permanent protection fence to protect burn for at least two growing seasons. All mitigating measures listed in the EA will be implemented. Total funding for the Stonehouse Fire is \$ 17,875.

Rationale: The proposed action will promote recovery of the perennial grasses, forbs and shrubs, and allow native seedling establishment in the area. The plant recovery will help to protect the soil and allow natural successional processes to occur ensuring the integrity of the ecosystem.

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Andrews Resource Area Manager

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Date

XV. LIST OF PREPARERS/REVIEWERS

A. Participating BLM Staff

Miles Brown, Andrews Resource Area Manager  
Jim Buchanan, Range Management Specialist/Ecologist  
Rick Hall, Natural Resource Specialist  
Cam Swisher, Environmental Protection Specialist  
Joan Suther, Supervisory Natural Resource Specialist  
Jeff Rose, Fire Ecologist

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
FOR THE  
SHEEPSHEAD COMPLEX  
EMERGENCY FIRE REHABILITATION PLAN  
EA OR-027-02-040

The Burns District, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has analyzed a proposal (and one alternative) for accomplishment of emergency rehabilitation of burned BLM land in the Sheepshead Complex (M381) on the Andrews Resource Area, and supported by the Andrews Management Framework Plan (MFP), August 1982. This document may be reviewed at the Burns District Office.

The design features and the recommended mitigation measures identified in the attached Environmental Assessment (EA) would assure that NO significant adverse impacts would occur to the human environment other than those already addressed in the Andrews MFP. Adverse effects of the proposal are minimal and of short duration with no residual impact. They are as follows:

- a) minimal soil disturbance
- b) minimal disruption to livestock operator's normal operation

Determination

On the basis of the information contained in the EA (comments received on the EA (if applicable)), and all other information available to me as is summarized above, it is my determination that none of the alternatives analyzed constitutes a major Federal action affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore, a new Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or supplement to the existing EIS is unnecessary and will not be prepared. This decision is placed in full force and effect in accordance with 43 CFR 4770.3(c) as of this date.

Any person who is adversely affected by this decision may file an appeal within 30 days from receipt of this decision in accordance with 43 CFR, Part 4 (see enclosed Form 1842-1). Any request for a stay of this decision in accordance with CFR § 4.21 must be filed with the appeal.

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Andrews Resource Area Manager

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Date

ANNUAL WORK PLAN SUMMARY  
SHEEPSHEAD COMPLEX EMERGENCY REHABILITATION PLAN

Item	Cost/Unit	Units	Total	Funding Year Needed
New temporary fence (materials)	\$2,000/mi.	2	\$4,000	2002
Fence Construction (user)	\$0	2	\$0	2002
Perm. Protective Fence (materials)	\$2,000/mi	5	\$10,000	2002
Fence construction (contract)	\$1,000/mi.	5	\$5,000	2002
SUBTOTAL			\$19,000	2002
Archaeological clearance	\$4,500/WM	.5 WM	\$ 2,250	2002
Project layout/supervision	\$4,500/WM	1 WM	\$ 4,500	2002
Monitoring	\$4,500/WM	.5 WM	\$ 2,250	2003
Monitoring	\$4,500/WM	.5 WM	\$ 2,250	2004
Temporary fence removal - Estimate removal FY04	\$4,500/WM	1 WM	\$ 4,500	2004
SUBTOTAL			\$15,750	
TOTAL			\$34,750	