



Malheur National Forest

P.O. Box 909, John Day, OR. 97845 (541) 575-3000
www.fs.fed.us/r6/malheur

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 3, 2006

For More Information: Pattie Hammett
Phone: (541)575-3144

Restoration Efforts Take Place On Shake Table Complex Fire Area

John Day, OR - The Malheur National Forest is in the process of a rehabilitation project on the Shake Table Complex Fire, which burned nearly 15,000 acres. After a large wildfire, Forest Service personnel conduct a Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) assessment to determine if the values at risk due to the fire are sufficient to warrant an emergency rehabilitation project. In the case of the Shake Table Fire Complex the BAER team determined that if a rehabilitation plan was not implemented the watershed and downstream values would be at risk.

“The main concerns were the effects from approximately 3,000 acres of the fire that burned so severely that all vegetation was killed,” said Stan Benes, Forest Supervisor. “It is anticipated that the seed bank in the soil was significantly damaged.”

The high severity burn areas are concentrated in the Todd Creek and the Widows Creek drainages. Several resources were impacted by the fire on both private and federal lands. Fire impacts ranged from conifer mortality to consumption of the above ground portions of the shrubs, forbs, and grasses.

“With most of the above ground biomass burned off in these high burn severity areas there are few physical barriers to slow water down as it accumulates in the area,” said Ted McArthur, Implementation Team Leader of the restoration effort. “If left unchecked the potential for massive soil erosion and runoff is high. Because of the severity of the burn if the area was not treated, the native vegetation could take years to recover, in the meantime the soil resources would be diminished from erosion.” Another factor of concern is the expansion of invasive weeds in the area in the absence of the native vegetation, he added.

Activities the Malheur National Forest is undertaking include the seeding of the highest severity burn areas with grasses, trees, and shrubs. Approximately 3,200 acres were aerially seeded with 100,000 pounds of winter wheat. The winter wheat is an annual grass that is often utilized in rehabilitation projects because it will establish quickly on the site, and will only last in the system for 2-3 years before it will start diminishing. The purpose of this is to help hold the soil in place, and to occupy the sites so that invasive plants cannot establish. It is also a good cover plant that can establish and help prepare the site for the native plants to re-establish. Another 1200 acres were aerially seeded with 8,000 pounds of native grasses, 300 pounds of bitterbrush and 30 pounds of pine.

Additionally, 500 acres of the steepest slopes and most at risk soils for erosion were aerially mulched with 400 tons of certified weed free straw, and 80 tons of a new product called wood straw that is processed using waste and unusable wood material from wood product processing plants. The purpose of the mulch is to create an artificial forest floor until plants can be re-established.

In-channel tree felling in the Todd Creek and Widows Creek drainages was conducted to help slow water and provide better fish habitat in the denuded riparian area. In addition, the roads within the fire are being treated to cope with anticipated higher flows in culverts and bar ditches.

All of this work is being conducted to minimize the risk from increased erosion and invasive plants.

To learn more about restoration efforts after a wildland fire, visit www.fs.fed.us/biology/watershed/burnareas/index.html .

-USFS-