

Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest

Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER)

Post-Fire BAER Assessment



October 20, 2021

BAER Information: 707-853-4243

FOREST SERVICE BAER TEAM BEGINS POST-FIRE ASSESSMENT OF SCHNEIDER SPRINGS FIRE

After a large wildfire, special actions may be necessary to provide for public and community safety and protect critical natural and cultural resources on federal managed lands. For example, loss of vegetation exposes soil to erosion; water runoff may increase and lead to flooding. Sediment may move downstream damaging roads and infrastructure or put endangered species and cultural resources at risk. The Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) program evaluates these situations on federal lands to help guard the safety of National Forest (NF) visitors and employees, protect federal property, and critical natural or cultural resources from further damage.

A BAER team has been established by the Okanogan-Wenatchee NF to begin a burned area assessment of the Schneider Springs Fire that recently burned on state, private, and federal lands. The Forest Service BAER team assesses National Forest System (NFS) lands.

BAER assessments are rapid evaluations of the burned area used to identify unacceptable risks on federal lands from post-fire threats and assist land managers in preparing burned areas for potential threats from rainstorms. Teams focus on emergency actions necessary to protect human life and safety, property, and critical natural and cultural resources. They assess potential post-fire impacts to the burned watersheds. Additionally, they coordinate and share information from their assessments with other federal agencies such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), National Weather Service (NWS) and US Geological Survey (USGS), state agencies, and local affected counties. NRCS is a federal agency that has post-fire responsibilities on private lands both within and downstream of burned areas.

The Schneider Springs Post-Fire BAER Team is assessing the potential post-fire effects related to life and safety, property to include roads and trails, along with natural, cultural and heritage resources. Specialized supporting disciplines on this team include hydrology, soils, geology, engineering, biology, recreation and archeology--all being supported by remote sensing and geographic information system (GIS) resources.

BAER assessment teams collect data during ground and aerial surveys and create maps using GIS and modeling to evaluate post-fire risks. The first step in the BAER assessment process is taking pre-fire and post-fire satellite imagery and data collected during ground surveys to produce a soil burn severity map. The soil burn severity provides baseline information to determine changed watershed conditions for assessing potential watershed impacts from wildfires. This information is compiled and presented to NF leadership along with recommended emergency stabilization treatments and actions in a BAER assessment report.

Rainfall runoff is sometimes, but not always, increased in burned areas. The Forest Service BAER assessment report will be shared with interagency cooperators who work with downstream private homeowners and landowners to prepare for potential post-fire flooding and debris flow impacts. Homes or businesses that could be impacted by flooding from federal land that result from wildfires may be eligible for flood insurance coverage from the National Flood

Insurance Program (NFIP). Information about NFIP is available through FEMA at www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program or www.floodsmart.gov/wildfires. Other flood preparedness information is available at www.ready.gov/floods at www.floodsmart.gov/.

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 and increased water runoff. Flash flooding may occur quickly during heavy rain events-be prepared to take action. Current weather and emergency notifications can be found at the **National Weather Service** website: <https://www.weather.gov/pdt/>.*

Schneider Springs Post-Fire BAER Assessment information is available at: <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/7860/> and at: <http://www.centralwashingtonfirerecovery.info/>

