

Department of the Interior Departmental Manual

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Series: Public Lands

Part 620: Wildland Fire Management

Chapter 7: Post-Wildfire Recovery

Originating Office: Office of Wildland Fire

620 DM 7

7.1 Purpose. This chapter provides the policy, objectives, and requirements for the Department of the Interior (DOI) Post-Wildfire Recovery program for use of burned area emergency stabilization (ES) and burned area rehabilitation (BAR) on bureau/office managed lands.

A. The purpose of the Post-Wildfire Recovery program (Emergency Stabilization and Burned Area Rehabilitation) is to reduce the risk of resource damage and restore landscapes impacted by wildfire and to promote long-term restoration and recovery objectives.

B. The principal purpose of the ES program funding is to prevent further degradation of natural and cultural resources, and protect life, property, and other values.

C. The principal purpose of the BAR program funding is to protect resources by repairing or improving landscapes unlikely to recover naturally to management approved conditions within an acceptable timeframe, and to repair or replace minor assets. The BAR program funding is to initiate longer-term actions to repair damages caused by wildfire in circumstances in which natural recovery is unlikely to occur within an acceptable timeframe considering management objectives and to encourage the protection, conservation, and restoration of fire-impacted lands and resources consistent with land and resource management plan objectives.

7.2 Scope. The policy in this chapter applies to all DOI bureau/office activities involving post-wildfire recovery.

7.3 Policy.

A. Program Scope. The DOI uses ES and BAR treatments to reduce the risk of resource damage and restore landscapes impacted by wildfire and to promote long-term restoration and recovery objectives. Development of treatments will use the best available science to ensure success and effectiveness. Bureaus must link all ES and BAR project plans to long-term restoration needs and programs; and identify any future activities necessary for successful projects.

B. Funding Allocations.

(1) Emergency Stabilization.

(a) Funding is authorized at the beginning of each fiscal year within the suppression allocation. The level is based on ten percent of the ten-year rolling suppression expenditure average for DOI, which is then allocated to the fire bureaus based on the rolling 10-year average of acres burned by each bureau annually, excluding Alaska.

(b) Emergency Stabilization funding authority may be redistributed among bureaus, or the overall authority increased, if conditions warrant during the fiscal year. The Director, Office of Wildland Fire (OWF) coordinates and approves any redistribution of ES funding authority among bureaus or increase the total allocation. Requests for redistribution or increase of ES funding authority must be made in writing by the Bureau Director to the Office of Wildland Fire. Any such requests will document why the initial ES funding allocation is insufficient to meet the needs for ES projects and activities and describe management actions taken within the bureau to manage ES costs.

(c) Unused ES funding authority will not remain with a Bureau for its use in future fiscal years, except as provided by Section E(1)(b).

(2) Burned Area Rehabilitation. The BAR funding is allocated to each bureau at the beginning of the fiscal year or following Congressional appropriations. Allocations among bureaus are based on the rolling five year average of non-Alaska acres burned by each bureau, using data from the Wildland Fire Management Information System and the Fire Management Information System, after accounting for any funds to be used for administrative or program-wide costs. The BAR funding that has not been expended or obligated by the end of the fiscal year will be retained by the bureau and will not be considered in the distribution of the next year funds. The BAR funding that a Bureau Director determines is no longer required will be returned to the parent account and included in the total amount for allocation. The OWF periodically reviews bureau obligations and expenditures and makes recommendations to the AS-PMB if a bureau or bureaus have large unobligated balances. If there are large unobligated balances then the AS-PMB will work with the bureau to obligate or reallocate as needed. In accordance with normal budget procedures, bureaus should expend prior year funding (carryover) first.

C. Emergency Stabilization Project Approvals.

(1) Each bureau must establish written protocols for review and approval of Emergency Stabilization projects.

(2) Project plans for Emergency Stabilization projects must demonstrate linkage to BAR projects and long-term recovery and restoration activities.

D. Burned Area Rehabilitation Project Approvals.

(1) Each bureau must develop written protocols, to include rating criteria,

review and approval procedures, and internal bureau program and project oversight and monitoring, for projects using BAR funding based on Departmental guidance and criteria. The protocols will be provided to the Director, OWF.

(2) All projects must adhere to minimum standards to protect resources by repairing or improving landscapes unlikely to recover naturally to approved management conditions and to repair or replace minor assets. All projects must demonstrate linkage to long-term recovery and restoration and must be based on best available science to maximize success.

E. Time Frame for Use of Funds.

(1) Emergency Stabilization Funds.

(a) Emergency stabilization funding is provided for no more than one year plus 21 days after the ignition date of a wildfire, except as provided in Section E(1)(b).

(b) If ES treatments cannot be completed within one year, a local unit may request from the Bureau Director an extension based on factors such as climatic conditions or similar significant circumstances. The Bureau Director will adjudicate requests for an extension to complete the precluded treatments no later than December 31st of the second year following the ignition date, with notification to the OWF Director. Any funding used for extensions will be counted within the administrative authority for the affected bureau in the year the obligations take place.

(2) Burned Area Rehabilitation Funds. Funding for burned area rehabilitation treatments is available for no more than five years following 21 days after the ignition date of a wildfire.

F. Project Tracking, Monitoring, and Evaluation.

(1) All proposed and funded ES and BAR projects must be entered into an authoritative database of record.

(2) All funded ES and BAR projects must be monitored for consistency with project objectives.

(3) Project results and monitoring must be entered into the database of record as those data become available. Monitoring data will be collected, analyzed and stored using protocols designed to help managers fulfill monitoring requirements that encourage cooperative, interagency data management and information sharing. As necessary, the database of record will be modified to accommodate reporting of results and monitoring.

(4) The OWF, in collaboration with the bureaus will develop standard measures and tools for monitoring ES and BAR projects and evaluating the effectiveness of treatments. Funding for development of measures or tools must be treated as a program-wide BAR expense.

G. Program Governance.

(1) Fire/Resources Executive Committee (F/REC).

(a) The F/REC will provide cohesion and consistency among bureaus and ensure effective implementation and oversight of the ES and BAR programs in the Department.

(b) The F/REC will review and provide recommendations to the Director, OWF on requests for redistribution of ES funding authority.

(c) The F/REC will be comprised of executive leadership from bureau wildland fire and resource management programs along with the Director, OWF.

(2) Interior Burned Area Emergency Response Coordinators (IBAER).

(a) The IBAER will be chartered under the F/REC to provide integrated and consistent program coordination and implementation for ES and BAR programs and coordination with long term recovery and restoration activities of the bureaus.

(b) The IBAER will provide program and policy advice and recommendations to the F/REC.

(c) The IBAER will provide advice and recommendations on ES or BAR redistribution requests and program-wide BAR expenses to the F/REC.

7.4 **Handbooks.** Technical or detailed instructions, or information on specific activities that supplement general policies and procedures in this chapter are set forth in one or more approved Departmental Handbooks, issued pursuant to 620 DM 1.1 A (3). These Handbooks are available at <http://elips.doi.gov>.