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Route To: 5130

Date: June 20, 2020

Subject: Leader's Intent - BAER Assessment and Implementation for Bush Fire

To: Andy Casillas

I have management oversight responsibilities for the Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) assessment and implementation on the Bush Fire on the Tonto National Forest. As such, it is important to communicate my expectations to you as the team leader.

The purpose of the assessment is to determine if critical values are at risk due to immediate post-fire conditions and to develop appropriate actions to manage unacceptable risks. The results of your assessment will be documented on Form FS-2500-8 Burned Area Report following the directions contained in Interim Directive ID_2520-2020-1 found in FSM 2500 Chapter 2520.

I expect the project to be managed in a manner consistent with relevant and applicable laws, regulations, policies, and professional standards. The health and safety of the assessment and implementation teams, the public, agency employees, and incident responders is our highest priority throughout this process. Please do not hesitate to ask for support or assistance that will be needed to provide for additional safety. Identified critical values will be assessed for unacceptable risk within the categories of human life and safety, property, and natural and cultural resources as described and defined in the interim directive referenced above.

The BAER Assessment, including identification of critical values, is limited to National Forest System (NFS) lands. However, the actions we take (as well as their effectiveness) affect surrounding lands, as well as the infrastructure, and natural and cultural resources located on NFS lands. Our actions are of immeasurable value to our surrounding communities, as well as the public in general; therefore, maintaining open communication between our cooperators and interested citizens will be critical to our success.

Leader's Intent

- Ensure that safety considerations are the priority in all BAER activities.
- Provide the appropriate fire, safety, and BAER training.
- Ensure appropriate coordination between the Incident Management Team (IMT) and the BAER assessment team.
- Ensure early and continued communication with appropriate Federal, Tribal, State, county, and local emergency response agencies regarding potential threats off National Forest System land and Forest Service authorities.
- Determine if a burned-area emergency exists, consider action alternatives and recommend actions consistent with BAER policy.
- Coordinate with implementation team members to ensure prompt implementation of approved and funded emergency actions before damages or losses are likely to occur. Re-evaluate the continued need to complete any planned actions that were delayed, considering watershed recovery and the reduced probability or magnitude of risks.

- Maintain emergency stabilization measures when necessary to keep them functioning as designed, using monitoring results to justify and plan any necessary follow-up action.
- Ensure monitoring of actions to determine if emergency measures have met the planned objectives or need adjustment (sec. 2523.3).
- Ensure that BAER assessment team members are familiar with the objectives of the applicable land management plan for the area.
- Report annual performance measures and monitoring results.
- Conduct a cost/benefit analysis commensurate with the scope and complexity of the stabilization plan to address whether planned actions will substantially reduce risks and be cost effective.
- Submit initial and interim forms FS 2500-8, Burned-Area Report and monitoring plan, if applicable, to the Regional Forester within required timeframes (sec. 2523.06).
- Report project accomplishments by transmitting the final form FS 2500-8, Burned-Area Report, and if appropriate, Level II monitoring reports to the Regional Forester within required timeframes (sec. 2523.06).

Management Objectives

- Assess potential post-fire effects on, recommend risk reduction measures for, and implement funded measures associated with:
 1. Key human values (human life, communities, municipal watersheds, roads, etc.).
 2. Key cultural considerations (archaeological sites, traditional cultural properties, sacred sites, and minimize impacts to contemporary cultural resources).
 3. Key resource considerations (watershed restoration, endangered species, contaminants, and recreation improvements and facilities).

Expectations for Team Lead coordination and communication

- Maintain open communications with Agency Administrators and/or Agency Representatives, including updates/progress of all BAER activities via meeting, conference call, and/or email.
- Maintain open communications and coordinate activities with fire suppression or suppression rehabilitation organization while such remains in place.
- Provide for regular stakeholder and cooperator communications.
- Coordinate and disseminate information to the public (speaking with one voice).
- Ensure and enhance cooperative relationships with all partners, with special attention to local communities. Rely on local liaisons for insights into socio-political realities.
- With input from Agency Administrators and/or Agency Representatives, set priorities for development of Burned Area actions to manage unacceptable risk.
- Limit exposure/use of aircraft
- Manage costs in assessment, planning, and recommendations.

COVID-19 Guidance

- Remain flexible and adaptable, things are changing rapidly so guidance may change.

- Work closely with Agency Administrators and/or Agency Representatives to make decisions about whether to field a team, team composition, scope of assessment, and appropriate level of interaction with the IMT.
- Focus assessment to life and safety and use remote assessment tools where possible.
- Rely on home unit staff to complete assessments and implementation work unless absolutely necessary to bring in additional staffing.
- Use remote BAER personnel for tasks as appropriate.
- Drive to incidents where possible, striving to limit to one person per vehicle during travel and while in the field.
- Utilize remote computer formats as much as possible, and do not establish a “BAER den”. Limit in-person team meetings to the extent possible, and limit size in accordance with local jurisdiction orders.
- Complete writing and other office tasks in a telework setting (home or personal hotel room) in order to avoid gathering.
- Evening activities and exposures, personal habits, common sense, cleanliness and hygiene will likely be tailgate topics communicated regularly.

Thank you for your considerations of these important matters and for representing the Tonto National Forest.

Neil Bosworth
Forest Supervisor