

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Pacific Northwest Region**Wallowa-Whitman National Forest**

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JOSEPH, Ore. (October 5, 2022) – A Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team has arrived in Joseph, Oregon, to begin their assessment of the Double Creek, Nebo, Sturgill, Jones and Goat Mountain Fires.

BAER is an emergency program aimed at managing imminent unacceptable risks to human life and safety, property, and or critical natural and cultural resources from post-wildfire conditions.

The Team, comprised of U.S. Forest Service employees who specialize in multiple resource areas, is conducting field surveys and using science-based models to rapidly assess watersheds on National Forest System lands, then inventory BAER Critical Values, assess risk and determine the need for emergency measures and treatments on National Forest System lands. The Team will share any areas of concern outside of National Forest System lands with the appropriate federal, state, and county agencies so they can work with individual landowners under their respective authorities.

"There are over 200,000 acres of burned area to be covered and we know it is a big job," said Anthony Botello, deputy forest supervisor for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. "While for the majority of the burned area, we anticipate low to moderate burn severity and the fire effects are mostly positive, we are happy to have a BAER team here to help assess the risks to values that fires can cause. "

Team members will closely assess the watersheds for post-fire rain related impacts such as increased flooding, debris flow potential, and increased soil erosion. The Team will evaluate threats and risks and then recommend various emergency response strategies to be completed before the first damaging storm event. Those recommendations are submitted as a proposed emergency response plan for approval. Once approved, the Forest will receive funding to complete emergency response efforts within the fire area.

Treatments will be installed within one year from the date of full containment and may be monitored for up to three years. It is anticipated that the fire assessments will be completed by mid-October with the response plan implemented by the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Supervisor and any nearby private land shortly after.

For more information regarding this BAER assessment, visit <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/8435/>, or contact Kassidy Kern at Kassidy.kern@usda.gov (541-588-2000).