

## The Soil Conservation Service Viewpoint on Revegetation After Wildfires

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**Abstract.** The Soil Conservation Service recognizes the need for further research and synthesis of existing research conclusions. It proposed that the Coordinated Resource Management Planning process could benefit from a balanced technical advisory committee.

**Keywords:** Aerial seeding; erosion; revegetation.

The USDA-Soil Conservation Service wildfire policy is to revegetate only those portions of a wildfire where a significant amount of native seed has been destroyed and sheet and rill erosion is a threat to life, property, and water supplies. The USDA Soil Conservation Service Emergency Watershed Protection Program efforts are focused on portions of wildfires where there is a threat to life and property. This program is also used on floods, earthquakes, hurricanes and other natural disasters. Corrective actions include structural as well as revegetation work. The focus of this paper is revegetation. Nine percent of the total 1993 southern California wildfire acreage was revegetated in line with this policy. The USDA Soil Conservation Service and city, county, and state sponsors jointly funded this effort.

The Emergency Watershed Protection Program revegetation efforts are not intended to, and, will not control catastrophic landslides, which often accompany wildfires. Accelerated soil erosion on bare, steep slopes is a reality, and the associated sediment yield is a real threat to life and property. The Soil Conservation Service Universal Soil Loss Equation is used exten-

sively on wildland areas throughout the United States to predict erosion rates. Intensive, long-term interagency efforts were used to develop and test this model, and it is currently being revised to increase accuracy. Interagency environmental specialist teams make site visits to wildfire areas to identify locations where the native seed base has been significantly decreased and where there is a high sheet and rill erosion hazard. This information is analyzed before recommendations are given on whether to seed, how much to seed, and which species to seed. The remaining native seeds and applied seedlings (where the native seeds are not viable) can mitigate the soil erosion threat to life and property.

In the future, the percentage of acreage seeded has the potential of being reduced due to the adoption of improved seed sampling procedures. The Soil Conservation Service is ready and willing to work with all parties in a watershed-based Coordinated Resource Management Planning process which can lead to consensus building before the next wildfire emergency. Now is the time to focus on what we can agree on as a positive starting point. The Soil Conservation Service, like many other units of government, is not a research entity but does rely on valid research results from others to adjust policies. Our special area of activity focuses on applying conservation practices. The Coordinated Resource Management Planning process could focus both research needs and research conclusions by having a balanced technical advisory committee.