



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: Davida Carnahan
PHONE: 530-841-4485
Website: www.fs.fed.us/klamath

Fire Rehab Project Completed On Klamath National Forest

YREKA, California--A Burned Area Recovery Plan is being implemented on the Klamath National Forest in order to address resource damage incurred by the Panther Fire on the Happy Camp/Oak Knoll Ranger District. The Panther Fire was ignited by a lightning strike on July 21, 2008 approximately 15 miles south of Happy Camp. It later experienced an increase in activity due to winds that came through the area early in October.

Wildfires increase the risk of soil erosion which in turn may harm fisheries in the Klamath River and its tributaries. In order to help keep soils in place until new vegetation takes hold, Klamath firefighters and other employees this week helped to blanket 700 acres with 480 tons of weed-free rice straw from the Sacramento Valley. Tom Laurent, Klamath Soils Specialist and project leader, observed that "Vegetation is already starting to grow out there, but this winter and next winter will be critical time periods to see if our mulching, channel, and culvert treatments are working."

According to Laurent, the rehab project included other strategies to help prevent soils run-off and flooding. Crews also cleaned culverts of all debris and put vertical extensions in place to prevent future obstructions. Forest Service scientists from the Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) in Moscow, Idaho are monitoring these road treatments. Pete Robichaud and Randy Foltz, RMRS research engineers, want to know if the treatments are working as designed. Robichaud explained, "We will estimate the flows for the next three years and make some assessments as to how well these treatments are working, if they are able to handle the anticipated erosion and debris flow."

In draws that carry run-off directionally, crews fell dead trees to act as sediment traps. Laurent said all these tactics were implemented to protect Elk Creek for its value as the water source for Happy Camp, and as a salmon and steelhead fishery.

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Protecting the public safety and reducing the potential impacts to steelhead and salmon in the Klamath and its tributaries are the primary concerns directing efforts to stabilize the landscape before flood season begins. For more information about burned area rehabilitation projects, call (530) 841-4485.

PHOTO CUTLINES

BURNED AREA—Site of the Panther Fire that was ignited on July 21, 2008 approximately 15 miles south of Happy Camp.

AERIAL MULCHING—Weed-free rice straw from the Sacramento Valley is dropped over the Panther Fire burned area to help hold soils in place.

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