



Natural Resources Conservation Service
Capitola Local Partnership Office
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POST FIRE RESTORATION ON TIMBERLAND

By

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Over 7,000 acres of private property have burned in Lockheed Fire. Much of the land that burned was woodland including commercial timber composed of redwood, Douglas Fir, Knob Cone Pine, and a variety of mixed hardwoods. Other trees species damaged or destroyed include Ponderosa pine and several species of riparian trees such as Sycamore, California Buckeye and Big Leaf Maple.

Forest land owners and managers are very concerned about what might happen to fire damaged soils, slopes, and water courses next winter when the rains come. They are also wondering what can be done now to minimize the effects of erosion processes before any storm events. Still others are questioning whether or not to remove fire damaged or destroyed trees and other vegetation now or to wait.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a federal non-regulatory agency under the U.S. Department of Agriculture, will be assessing fire damages to natural resources and watersheds with forest land owners and managers in the coming weeks. Some of the more important post fire actions to take, according to the NRCS include the following:

- (1) Have an on-site assessment of fire damage done to your property by NRCS or other qualified fire restoration specialist that is certified in soil erosion and sediment control.
- (2) Don't be too quick to remove fire damaged trees and other vegetation, especially redwood and coastal live oak trees that have thick and/or fire resistant bark. On some properties, doing nothing may be the best solution, allowing nature to restore cover naturally. In areas where trees were partially damaged by fire, smoke or heat there will be an enormous leaf drop later this summer and fall that will provide soil protection from rain and runoff next winter. Consult with a registered professional forester for specific advice on which trees to cut and which trees to save;
- (3) Monitor and maintain any pre-existing and new fire/fuel breaks, access roads and trails that might exist on your property to make sure that surface runoff does not concentrate and cause these facilities to erode or cause damage to slopes, soils and water courses. Proper grading and/or correctly spaced and constructed water bars and/or drainage/rolling dips will help to prevent these bare soil and disturbed areas from being an erosion problem next winter.





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Note: In some cases water bars may actually cause problems if not located or constructed properly. In other cases they might not even be needed. Bare and disturbed soil areas can also be protected with a layer of slash or weed-free straw mulch. Consult with NRCS and/or Cal Fire for assistance on preventing erosion on fire/fuel breaks and access routes constructed this year in the fire fighting effort.

(4) Do not plant non-native re-seeding erosion control seed mixes. These mixes are not intended for forestland. Where soil and sunlight conditions are desirable some seeding of disturbed areas may be beneficial but should only be done in accordance with appropriate native or short-lived, non-invasive, non-native grasses and advice provided by NRCS or certified professional erosion and sediment control specialist. *Note: Seeding will delay native plant re-generation and actually compete with natural recovery of the forest landscape.*

(5) Runoff control will be imperative next winter in fire areas, especially where drainage facilities on roads and around structures were damaged, destroyed or inadequate. Efforts should be made to minimize concentrated flow especially over steep slopes. When ever possible runoff should not be channeled but allowed to either sheet over the soil and slopes as it naturally would or be controlled in such a way that it does not cause slope saturation or erosion. Contact NRCS for runoff control strategies and further details.

(6) Control non-native, invasive plants that will want to take over fire damaged soils and slopes in the coming months and year ahead. Non-native plants will slow natural regeneration and will likely create a higher fire and soil erosion hazard over time.

For more information and to request a free on-site assessment of your timber/woodland property, including site specific recommendations contact: NRCS at 831-475-1967. Also visit the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz web site at: www.rcdsantacruz.org

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