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WEBINAR Highlights – Recovering from Rangeland Fire

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Highlights:

- Some ecosystems need fire for reproduction and growth.
- How wildfire affects an ecosystem depends on the
 - Ecosystem's history with fire (is it fire dependent plant community?)
 - Pre-fire conditions - desirable species present? Invasives present?
 - The severity of the fire -how hot did it get?
 - Site characteristics (slope, elevation, soils, etc.)
 - Post-fire conditions (is there soil moisture, topsoil, surviving plant communities?)
- Fire can create variation across the landscape and opportunities for wildlife.
- Recovery from fire can take from a few years to many decades.
- Weather is the biggest predictor of seeding success.
- Intervening after a fire with seeding can have unintended consequences and be expensive.
- Best practice is to intervene with seeding in areas that have invasive risk, low pre-fire cover, and will respond to seeding (wetter microsites).
- Sites with a desirable species mix before the fire will have a seed bank to re-start from.
- If re-seeding, prioritize smaller areas with higher seeding rates to establish restoration islands that will serve as a seedbank for surrounding areas. Use high species diversity and higher seeding rates to increase the odds of success.
- Re-seed just before the ground freezes in the fall and before or after snow.
- Species like crested wheatgrass and smooth brome can out-compete other species so be sure your seed mix reflects the plant species you want to have at the site long term.
- Mulching is more effective for erosion control than seeding.
- Managing invasives and controlling erosion are other tools in the toolbox.



Post-fire variable impact. Photo:
Phil Brink