

Post Wildfire Restoration Practices

What to Do and What's a Waste of Time?

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The 6 Most Observed/Mis-Used Practices on the landscape following wildfire that are, in many circumstances, incorrectly installed or not needed at all:

1. Straw wattles
2. Jute netting (especially without underlying mulch or seed)
3. Removal of burn/damaged trees and/or other vegetation
4. Water bars (especially on fire breaks and trails) and other forms of diversion ditches, including diversions made with sand bags.
5. Seeding with non-native erosion control grass mixes and/or Hydro-seeding/mulching
6. Plastic sheeting

The 5 Best Practices to perform on the landscape following wildfire:

(Note: #2-5 if applicable)

1. Work with Nature especially in wildlands. In other words, let nature be a Best Management Practice. Only cut down/prune back fire damaged trees if they present a hazard to life or high value property improvements such as homes, utilities and access routes. Limit disturbance to soil, slopes, trees, plant root systems, seed bank, riparian areas, streams, etc.
2. Apply loose straw mulch (preferably rice or weed-free straw) 1-2" thick with minimum disturbance to soil. "Punch in" (with shovel) on steeper slopes. No need to spread straw under trees especially those that did not burn or only received heat/smoke damage because of heavy leaf drop.
3. Repair, eliminate existing drainage systems and/or install new systems, as needed, then monitor and maintain, including roadside ditches, throughout future winters. Provide inlet and outlet protection on road culverts and other existing drain outlets. Inspect and replace road culverts that have been compromised or burned through.
4. Limit seeding to native species or fast growing non-native sterile cereal grain to only disturbed soil/slopes around home sites, along driveways and access roads, areas damaged by the fire-fighting effort, & upslope of waterways to provide soil protection, filter runoff and protect water quality. Protect seedbed with 1-2" of weed free straw mulch. Note: Some seedbed preparation/hand raking may be necessary especially if there is an ash layer. No widespread seeding on open landscape and hillside slopes is recommended
5. Properly place and install straw wattles, using the right type for the right purpose. Straw wattles for runoff and sediment. Stormwater filter socks to trap chemicals, oils, hydrocarbons, metals, sediment/ash and other toxic substances in runoff from burned house sites and other structures containing or made from hazardous materials.

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