



## Line Officer's Guide to:

### Resource Advisors and Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER)

with FY22-26 Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR) and Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program appendices

## What are Resource Advisors?

*Resource Advisor* is a term that includes four firefighter positions. Resource advisors work directly for the Agency Administrator (AA), representing AA direction for meeting land and resource objectives during fire suppression. The resource advisor is responsible for identifying, evaluating, and advising the AA and suppression personnel on potential impacts of fire operations on natural and cultural resources, and infrastructure. The resource advisor draws from their own expertise as well as communication with local specialists to advise on anticipated impacts from the fire management strategy. Resource advisors will assist the incident management team (IMT) in developing mitigations to satisfy the mutual objectives of wildland fire suppression and resource protection and ensure IMT compliance with law, regulation, and policy for protection of resources. The resource advisor also prescribes suppression-damage repair measures and oversees their implementation, as documented in a Suppression Repair Plan approved by the AA and IMT. On more complex incidents, there may be a lead resource advisor (REAC), with a team of resource advisors working under them. A resource advisor is typically assigned by the local Line Officer as soon as heavy equipment or an IMT is ordered to an initial attack incident.

### Resource Advisor Qualifications

Resource Advisor [Incident Qualifications and Certification System \(IQCS\) positions](#) include Resource Advisor (READ), Resource Advisor Coordinator "Lead READ" (REAC), and Fireline Resource Advisor (REAF). Archaeologist (ARCH) is a resource advisor who focuses on cultural and heritage matters.

## The Line Officer's Role

The Forest, Grassland or Area Supervisor (Unit Supervisor) is the line officer responsible for implementing an effective, efficient, risk-based wildfire response that integrates natural and cultural resource concerns.

### Pre-season Actions:

- ☐ Identify a Unit Resource Advisor Coordinator, typically a program-level specialist with resource advisor experience.
- ☐ Support unit staff in attending trainings and gaining experience in resource advisor and Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) positions. Local personnel familiar with the area generally make well-informed resource advisors. While resource advisors and BAER teams have different roles and responsibilities, the expertise gained by each during assignments is complimentary.
- ☐ Facilitate and support preparedness activities, including unit BAER and resource advisor refreshers, development of local resource advisor guides, and updating WFDSS information annually.

### After a fire starts:

- ☐ Assign a resource advisor as soon as heavy equipment or an IMT is ordered to the fire.
- ☐ Ensure AA or Agency Administrator Representative (AREP) communication with the resource advisor.
- ☐ Make clear your expectations for resource protection with the IMT and resource advisors.
- ☐ For larger or more complex fires, order a lead resource advisor (REAC) to serve as primary contact with IMT and AA.
- ☐ Review and approve the Suppression Repair Plan and ensure repair work is completed after IMT leaves.



## Line Officer's Guide to: Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER)

### What is BAER:

Post-wildfire actions range from suppression repair to burned area emergency response to long-term recovery. While many wildfires cause minimal damage to the landscape and pose few threats to land or people downstream of the burned area, some fires result in damage that requires special efforts to reduce post-fire impacts. The Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) program is designed to identify and manage imminent post-fire threats to resources on National Forest System (NFS) lands and reduce the associated risk through appropriate emergency measures to protect human life and safety, property, and critical natural or cultural resources. BAER is an emergency program for stabilization work that involves time-critical activities to be completed before damaging storms or other events to meet program objectives.

Post-fire emergency response is a shared responsibility. There are several Federal, State and local agencies that have emergency response responsibilities or authorities in the post-fire environment. The Forest Service (FS), and other land management agencies, only have authority to complete actions on and for areas under their jurisdiction. ***It is important in multi-jurisdictional fires to clearly communicate that the FS assessment is only for National Forest System (NFS) lands and not give the impression that the assessment will be addressing threats to all neighboring land and values.*** The FS has no authority under BAER to protect private property (on or off NFS lands) from natural hazards. While we are not authorized by Congress to complete risk evaluations or implement treatments for these off-forest values, we can and should provide information about threats originating on burned NFS lands and coordinate with our partner agencies to aid in the evaluations of changed watershed conditions and threats to these values. Interagency coordination is a large part of the BAER assessment process.

### The Line Officer's Role

The Unit Supervisor is the line officer responsible for the BAER assessment and implementation of authorized actions. While coordination of the assessment team may be delegated to a District Ranger or other line officer representative, the Unit Supervisor retains the decision-making authority for the emergency determination and BAER funding request.

### Key Timeframes

- BAER assessments generally take seven to ten days but can last up to 21 days in complex situations.
- BAER assessments usually start around 50-80% containment and are completed prior to fire containment.
- The Initial BAER funding request must be submitted to the Regional Office within seven days of fire containment.
- Once the request is submitted, the Regional Office has three business days to respond. If the request is greater than Regional Forester Approval authority, it must be forwarded to the Washington Office, who then have an additional three days to respond.
- Funding is available to begin implementation within three days of authorization.
- BAER treatments must be completed prior to damaging events and no later than one year from fire containment.
- Effectiveness monitoring and maintenance of treatments can be authorized for up to three years. An interim funding request is required each year.
- While BAER assessments are funded through wildfire suppression, they are their own incidents within dispatch and must be set-up and staffed separately from the wildfire incident.



## Funding

The BAER program is fully funded through Wildfire Suppression.

## Pre-season Actions:

☐ Become familiar with [BAER program information and guidance](#). Attend BAER for Line Officer training or watch recorded sessions.

☐ Identify a [Unit BAER Coordinator \(UBC\)](#). This is typically a member of the watershed staff with BAER experience.

The UBC provides a critical link between unit staff and line officers, local BAER team leaders and members, and Regional and National Post-fire program staff. UBCs work closely with Staff and Line Officers year-round to ensure BAER policy and procedures are understood and followed. The UBC facilitates the accomplishment of all BAER activities, from assessment through implementation, then into completion with monitoring and reporting.

☐ Support unit staff in attending trainings and gaining experience in BAER and resource advisor positions.

BAER assessments are fire assignments and staff must have the appropriate IQCS fire line qualifications to work on an active fire. Having qualified and experienced staff on your unit will facilitate a more efficient and streamlined assessment and implementation effort when your unit has a wildfire. While resource advisors and BAER teams have different roles and responsibilities, their expertise is complimentary. BAER [Incident Qualifications and Certification System \(IQCS\) positions](#) include Burned Area Emergency Response Specialist (BAES) and Burned Area Emergency Response Documentation Specialist (BADO).

☐ Facilitate and support preparedness activities, including annual leadership team UBC presentation, unit BAER and resource advisor refreshers, and UBC interagency coordination efforts with partners (e.g. NWS, NRCS, BLM, and State and County emergency services). Establish mutually understood roles and responsibilities for pre- and post-fire.

☐ Unit Supervisor should consider connecting with the Procurement and Property Services, including Contracting and Grants and Agreements, pre-season and early in the BAER process to identify expedited emergency processing opportunities.

☐ The UBC should identify and coordinate with partners that may be willing to provide emergency response support.

## After a fire starts:

☐ Monitor wildfires for BAER assessment needs.

National Post-Fire Program staff maintain a dashboard of fires on NFS lands that require BAER consideration. BAER policy requires assessment of all fires greater than 500 acres, although fires smaller than 500 acres with complex or numerous BAER critical values (BCVs) can also be considered. Regional Coordinators will communicate with UBCs to facilitate initial size-up on the fire to determine level of assessment needed. Not all fires will require a BAER team. The assessment and team staffing should be commensurate with the complexity of the incident.

The UBC will identify the [BAER Team Leader](#) and team members in consultation with the Unit Supervisor and Regional and/or National Post-fire Coordinators, set-up the incident through dispatch, and place resource orders. Unit Supervisor will need to concur and approve the BAER team staffing and the availability of any local Unit personnel in accordance with [FS BAER policy](#) and the [Interagency Standards for Fire and Aviation Operations](#).



☐ Before the BAER team arrives:

- ☐ Identify a District Ranger, Agency Administrator (AA), or Agency Administrator Rep (AREP) assigned as the point-of-contact (POC) for the BAER team and coordinate BAER team introductions with Incident Management Team (IMT). The BAER team reports to the Unit Supervisor, not the IMT.
- ☐ Provide a Leader's Intent Message and/or Letter to the BAER Team Leader, especially for politically sensitive fires or teams with off-unit staffing. Do not issue a Delegation of Authority to the BAER team. The Unit Supervisor retains decision-making authority for the emergency determination and funding request.
- ☐ Review and sign the BAER team Job Hazard Analysis or Risk Assessment and Overtime Authorization.

☐ During the BAER assessment:

- ☐ Identify a District Ranger, Agency Administrator (AA), or Agency Administrator Rep (AREP) to participate in BAER team briefings as needed. If this individual is not serving as the suppression incident's AA or AREP, ensure regular coordination between the two.
- ☐ Meet with BAER Team Leader and UBC to review and approve request.
- ☐ Sign the initial BAER funding request for submission to the Regional Office for approval.
- ☐ Facilitate sharing of BAER team assessment information with interagency partners. The UBC, BAER Team Leader, and/or BAER interagency liaison will generally take the lead on interagency coordination.

Since fire effects often cross administrative boundaries, post-fire conditions may threaten values not owned or managed by the FS. Post-fire emergency response is a shared responsibility. Several Federal, State, and local agencies have emergency response responsibilities or authorities in the post-fire environment. Unit Leadership, the BAER team, and UBC should engage with interagency partners to facilitate consideration of off-unit values covered through other programs with the relevant responsible entities.

The 2500-8 request form should not be shared publicly due to Federal Acquisition Regulations unless financial information is redacted. Public and technical summary templates are available and recommended for interagency use.

- ☐ Work with your UBC to identify a local or off-unit implementation lead as well as local-unit staff leads for the individual components of the emergency stabilization plan. A handoff from the assessment team to the implementation staff is critical to ensure implementation team efficiency. The local-unit staff should be engaged throughout the development of treatments to ensure cost estimates reflect local market conditions, availability of local staff or contractors, and overall implementation feasibility.

It is often difficult to find off-unit staff for implementation efforts. This should be taken into consideration during the development of a realistic treatment plan.

☐ After funding authorization:

- ☐ Ensure approved BAER Program of Work (POW) tasks are entered in applicable POW databases.
- ☐ Ensure the agency's implementation operations and processes are followed.



☐ Ensure BAER expenditures and spending of funds are prudent, within budget and align with the BAER program, including the [BAER Salary and Expense Guidance](#).

☐ Designate CORs and program leads (local staffing is preferred).

☐ Sign interim funding requests, as needed, and submit to the Regional Office for approval.

☐ After implementation:

☐ Participate as the Unit Supervisor and AA in the BAER After Action Review (AAR), if one is held.

☐ Continued participation in post-incident/post-season recovery discussions with the Unit's Leadership Team and partners.

☐ Ensure that your UBC submits a Final BAER Accomplishment Report to the Regional and/or National Post-Fire staffs.

### Additional Considerations:

- Often the first damaging post-fire event is a season-ending storm that controls or contains the wildfire. If the BAER assessment and/or implementation is not completed before winter or the first damaging storm event(s), have your UBC consult with your Regional BAER Coordinator on how to proceed with implementation. Generally, you will need to re-determine if treatments are still warranted and necessary, considering the magnitude of damages that occurred because of the delay, and the state of watershed recovery the following season.
- BAER personnel are limited in number and availability. Many of the same specialists serve as resource advisors during fire suppression, on BAER assessments, BAR request formulation, disaster recovery support, and are needed for immediate NEPA support for long-term recovery projects such as hazard tree abatement projects. Consider staff capacity and burn-out during busy fire seasons. If your unit has a quiet year, encourage your specialists to take an assignment on a neighboring unit. The favor will likely be returned during your next busy year.
- Assessments beyond BAER, such as Burned Area Rehabilitation or Disaster Recovery, are the responsibility of the local unit and should be funded through non-emergency funding sources.

For support and questions, reach out to Regional or National Post-Fire staff. Current contacts are listed on the [Post-Fire Program SharePoint Page](#).

USDA FS Program Information (adapted from the Red Book)	Suppression Activity Damage Repair	Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER)	Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR)	Restoration and Recovery
<b>Objective:</b>	Repair damages	Prevent/minimize damages	Repair damages and jumpstart recovery	Repair/restore damages
<b>Damages related to:</b>	Fire suppression	Prevention/mitigation for post-fire events	Fire and post-fire flood damage	All fire effects
<b>Urgency:</b>	Before incident closeout	1-12 months	1-3 years (IIJA)	3+ years
<b>Responsibility:</b>	Incident Commander	Local Line Officer	Local Line Officer	Local Line Officer
<b>Funding Type:</b>	Wildfire Suppression (P-code)	Wildfire Suppression (H-code)	FY22-26 (IIJA)	Regular program or supplemental funds



## FY22-26 Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR) Program Appendix

### What is BAR:

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (PL 117-58) authorizes the agency to expand the FY20-22 Minor Infrastructure and Facilities Rehabilitation pilot program into a [Burned Area Rehabilitation \(BAR\) program for FY22-26](#). The BAR program includes post-fire efforts taken within three years of wildfire containment to repair or improve lands unlikely to recover naturally to a management-approved condition or to repair/replace minor infrastructure and facilities damaged by the fire and post-fire flooding events. As with the Pilot Program, BAR program funding under IIJA covers certain post-fire rehabilitation efforts that do not fit within the BAER program constraints.

### Process:

Requests are reviewed at the Washington Office and allocations approved on a quarterly schedule.

- Each burned area will have two opportunities to submit burned area rehabilitation requests: the first opportunity is in the quarter after fire containment, and the second is 12 months later.
- Since post-fire floods are unpredictable, flood repair work can be requested in any quarter to ensure there is time to complete the work within program timelines.
- Funding requests will be collected at the Regional Offices for submission to the Washington Office each quarter according to the schedule below:

Month of fire containment	Funding Request due to RO
July-Sept	1-Dec (Quarter 1)
Oct-Dec	1-Mar (Quarter 2)
Jan-March	1-Jun (Quarter 3)
April-June	1-Sep (Quarter 4)

### The Line Officer's Role

The Unit Supervisor is the line officer responsible for assigning local staff to complete the BAR funding request and project implementation. Unit Supervisor signature is required on the BAR Request Cover Page.

### Notes:

- Regions receive a separate allocation for salary and related expenses associated with IIJA programs, including BAR, and each Region allocates these funds differently. BAR funding is not available to cover agency personnel time for assessment or implementation needs and should not be included in a funding request. Consult with your regional budget staff to determine whether IIJA funding for personnel time is available to your unit.
- Activities must be in accordance with approved management plans and applicable agency policy, standards, and all relevant federal, state, and local laws and regulations. This includes any NEPA, ESA consultation (FWS, NMFS), and cultural consultation (SHPO) required for these treatments and activities.
- BAER specialist and Resource Advisors often identify needs that are outside of the scope of BAER and Suppression Repair and could fall within other programs like BAR. Ask your local resource advisor(s) and BAER coordinator(s) to compile this information for the BAR request.



## USDA's Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program Appendix

### What is EWP:

The [Emergency Watershed Protection \(EWP\) Program](#) helps local communities recover after a natural disaster strikes. The EWP Program offers technical and financial assistance to help local communities relieve imminent threats to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms and other natural disasters that impair a watershed. EWP does not require a disaster declaration by federal or state government officials for program assistance to begin. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is the lead agency for EWP and has the authority to implement the EWP program on state, tribal and private lands. FS has the authority to implement the EWP program on NFS lands. [In 2023, the agencies signed an MOU](#) that establishes the process by which the FS can request EWP funds from NRCS to implement watershed protection measures on NFS lands.

### Process:

During a response to a watershed emergency, the NRCS State Conservationist (STC) and Unit Supervisor will coordinate joint opportunities for:

- a. site assessments,
- b. conveying sponsor and public information, and
- c. program implementation in compliance with federal requirements.

The project funding request should be coordinated through the FS National Post-Disaster Recovery Director with the [required documentation](#) to initiate a task order under the Interagency Agreement (IAA).

### Project Requirements:

Projects must meet the following requirements:

1. For implementing watershed protection measures on NFS lands only when there is a watershed impairment on NFS lands that threatens life and property:
  - a. on non-federal lands; or
  - b. on NFS lands that are subject to an easement or access agreement in existence prior to the watershed emergency.
2. Determinations that the measures are:
  - a. for runoff retardation and soil-erosion prevention;
  - b. in cooperation with landowners and land users;
  - c. necessary to safeguard lives and property from floods, drought, and the products of erosion; and
  - d. related to a sudden watershed impairment caused by a fire, flood, or any other natural occurrence

### Limitations:

To avoid an improper use of EWP funds, work completed must:

1. provide benefits to resources located outside of NFS lands; AND
2. are actions that the FS would not otherwise complete for the benefit of NFS lands; AND
3. ensure the FS has not received appropriations for the specific purpose of the project.

If you identify a potential EWP project after a watershed impairment, please coordinate early with [local NRCS staff](#) and [National FS Post-Disaster Recovery staff](#).