Fact Sheet

**When are re-seeding and erosion control measures necessary after fire?**

Wildfires are destructive to wildlife habitat and human infrastructure, not to mention dangerous to life and well-being. The large-scale changes to the landscape after a major wildfire can instill a desire for immediate action to return the landscape to what we think of as “normal”. However, landscapes in the West are adapted to frequent fires and have the ability to quickly heal the damage.

**Unless your property has one of the following exceptions, the general recommendation for reseeding and erosion control is to WAIT AND SEE.**

**Exceptions and possible treatment:**

* Disturbed soils from firelines or other heavy equipment work – reseeding.
* Extremely steep slopes that have human infrastructure or homes downhill – erosion control products such as straw bales or wattles, silt fence, etc.; reseeding possible but tricky.
* Previously weed-infested areas, especially if only lightly burned – reseeding and weed control.
* Extremely hot fires that change the soil structure so that it repels rather than absorbs water (hydrophobic) – no treatment. (Many areas may not have burned hot enough to create these conditions.)

**Wait and see:** Many of the grasses, wildflowers, shrubs and trees in the burned areas will re-sprout on their own. You may already notice some grasses and perennials popping up, and that process will continue. Reseeding in some areas may hurt more than help: it can increase plant competition, or introduce species not appropriate to the area, and the expensive seed may be eaten by wildlife whose normal food has been consumed by the fire. Adding chopped straw will inhibit natural plant regeneration. Perennial native bunchgrasses and woody shrubs will regenerate much more quickly than seeds that must have time and moisture to become established.

Occasionally, re-seeding or planting bareroot shrubs and trees may be desired. Okanogan Conservation District staff can help landowners determine the appropriate species to plant. Contact us at (509) 422-0855 for more information.