



Grizzly Gulch Fire Rehabilitation Project

South Dakota has experienced severe drought conditions for several years and, as a result has experienced major fires on private lands in the Black Hills. On June 29, the Grizzly Gulch Fire started in an area adjacent to Deadwood, South Dakota. This fire burned 11,589 acres of which 6,292 acres were private.

This fire resulted in severe watershed disturbances above the city of Deadwood. There were two major rain events following the fire that caused flooding in Deadwood and damage to private property. Heavy rain events that occurred after rehabilitation and restoration projects were completed did not result in any flooding or damage.



Contour Felling

The South Dakota Division of Resource Conservation and Forestry participated in the Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) and Rapid Assessment teams that were formed for these fires. In addition, the Division completed several Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) projects on the Grizzly Gulch Fire with funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

On the Grizzly Gulch Fire, the Division completed 143 acres of contour felling and 102 acres of aerial re-seeding on the worst of the severely burned areas of privately owned land. Debris removal from the streams flowing through

Deadwood, barrier construction for diversion of flood waters, and removal of a damaged home that was blocking a major drainage were other projects funded under the NRCS EWP.

Division foresters provided technical assistance to landowners affected by all three fires. The technical assistance consisted of advice on potential survivability of scorched trees, identification of hazard trees, insect and disease identification and control advice, erosion control advice, advice on native grass re-seeding and noxious weed control, information on tree salvage projects, re-planting of native trees, and non-commercial thinning in areas not decimated by the fires.



Aerial Seeding

Many private landowners worked with the local forest products industry to remove salvageable trees. Industry began removing the material while smoke was still in the air. They also used innovative techniques and equipment, such as roller-choppers, to reduce the erosion risk on salvaged areas.

Getting into the damaged areas quickly reduced the costs of rehabilitation to private landowners and helped the area to begin to recover sooner.