



# FACT SHEET



United States Department of Agriculture  
Web: <http://www.usda.gov>

United States Department of Interior  
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## Making a Difference Rio Grande National Forest - Colorado

After the Million Fire of 2002 on the Rio Grande National Forest in southern Colorado, a huge restoration project took place. Endangered Species Consultation was part of the Burned Area Emergency Restoration plan.

A small part of that effort was a 500 acre watershed restoration project utilizing aerial seeding. This project was carried out under a categorical exclusion as part of the Healthy Forests Initiative. A contractor was hired to apply grass seed by airplane to the severely burned areas at a prescribed seeding rate.

Helicopters were used to drop certified weed-free hay over the seed. Large straw bales were trucked into the work area and then placed into special cargo nets. When the helicopters were over the target area the bales fell apart upon impact on the ground, which provided the needed cover until the grass could germinate. The results were excellent.

In August of 2004 a field review by project managers and regional office personnel was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the project. The analysis showed that there was no evidence of soil movement and that there is an abundance of ground cover and signs of aspen sprouting over most of the area. The outcome of 80 to 90 percent groundcover far exceeded expectations.

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For more information on the Healthy Forests Restoration Act and the Healthy Forests Initiative, visit [www.healthyforests.gov](http://www.healthyforests.gov)

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