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Section: News

Erosion a concern in Carr Fire burn area
Agencies offer free materials, plan to work with landowners

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Even though the summer of 2018 is fading in the rearview mirror, the potential for soil erosion on hills left barren from the Carr Fire is an issue just around the next corner as the rainy season approaches.

State and local officials are worried that if erosion control measures aren't put in place for at-risk areas, some properties in the Carr Fire burn area could suffer erosion damage.

"We really want to help the landowners because we don't want their land from being eroded into the creeks," said Nicole Balkow, a project coordinator for the Western Shasta **Resource Conservation District**.

The conservation district is working with the California Regional Water Quality Control Board to install erosion control measures on 1,640 acres within the Carr Fire burn area.

Balkow said the district, which will have crews installing the erosion control measures, is having trouble reaching some of the 416 property owners that qualify for free erosion control measures.

The district needs landowners to sign a form giving the district access to their property so crews can do the work, she said. The district has mailed out forms to property owners, but many people are difficult to reach because they were burned out of their homes, she said.

The Carr Fire burned 229,651 acres and 1,079 homes. The erosion control being paid for by the state and the work is being focused on properties near five creeks in the Redding area: Rock, Middle, Salt, Jenny and Carter creeks.

The water board is using \$2.3 million in state grants and is seeking another \$6.4 million to pay for doing the erosion control work.

Because of the size of the fire, the state is limited to focusing on areas most at risk of erosion, said Clint Snyder, assistant executive director for the regional water board.

The fire burned with such intensity that on some hillsides there is little vegetation left to hold soil in place when the rains come, state officials said.

The North State is one of several areas around the state facing the risk of flooding and debris flows from winter storms because of wildfires this past summer.

Federal, state and local officials issued a warning about flood and debris flow risk Wednesday at a press conference in Santa Barbara, adjacent to Montecito where a January debris flow from the Thomas Fire burn scar devastated homes, killed 21 people and left two missing, according to The Associated Press.

The state Department of Water Resources says more than 7 million California residents are at risk of flooding.

Experts say post-fire floods are a greater risk to homes downslope from scorched areas because the ground cannot absorb the water, which picks up ash, topsoil and debris as it flows downhill.

Conservation district employees will use a variety of measures to control erosion, including spreading grass seed, laying out rice straw and placing straw wattles to stop soil from washing downhill, Balkow said.

The district does not charge for the materials or labor to place the erosion control, she said.

To contact the district or receive an temporary entry permit, call 530-776-5144 or email carrfire@westernshastarcd.org.

In addition to preventing damage from erosion, Snyder said he and others are worried about rain washing silt and ash into local creeks and destroying spawning nests used by winter-run salmon, a species that is considered threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

For those who don't live along one of the five creeks, the city of Redding, McConnell Foundation and other agencies are offering free rice straw bales and straw wattles for erosion prevention.

Residents who own property within the Carr Fire burn area can get up to 10 bales of straw and four straw wattles per property.

The material is free and being given out from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at 8031 Eastside Road in Redding.

An erosion control installation demonstration is set for 10 a.m. to noon.

There is also a video demonstration on how to install erosion control measures at <https://bit.ly/2OLONWe>.

To receive materials residents must provide proof they own property in the Carr Fire burn area.

There is also volunteer assistance with installing erosion controls available for those who are physically disabled. For more information, contact Travis Menne by email at tmenne@cityofredding.org.

--- **Index References** ---

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