

Frequently Asked Questions

Questions and Answers about the BAER and WERT Post Fire Technical Reports

During the Thomas Fire that began on December 4, 2018, the U.S. Forest Service and CalFire formed two teams to evaluate threats to life, property, and cultural and natural resources caused by changes to the watershed from the fire. The **BAER** and **WERT** reports have now been released.

1. How will these reports be used?

While many of the recommendations in the reports are already being implemented, the recommendations will help the County and other local jurisdictions evaluate threats and prioritize efforts to protect life and property from future storm threats. The data will also help the U.S. Forest Service decide what needs to be done to protect trails, roads and cultural sites within the Los Padres National Forest. In addition, the data in these reports will be available for scientists and other academics to use in research.

2. What does the report recommend?

The reports lists a number of findings that fall into three categories:

- a. Monitor storm threats and distribute warnings when incoming winter storms could present threat to life and property
- b. Maintenance and clearing of drainage channels and debris basins
- c. Protective measures to help reduce the danger from future debris blows

3. Will the report effect my ability to rebuild?

This report is not intended to be used as a land-use planning tool. Instead, its intended use is for the development of mitigations steps to protect life and property from the impact of future storms, as well as recovery from the Thomas Fire.

4. How long will the threat of debris flow exist from Thomas Fire?

That depends on how long it takes for vegetation in the watershed areas to regrow—usually 2-5 years. We need enough precipitation for the vegetation to grow, but not so much that it will cause additional debris flows.

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5. Is it typical to have three teams do watershed evaluation?

No. Typically only the Forest Service, which created the BAER report, does watershed evaluation for property on its lands, while CalFire (WERT Report) evaluates watershed impacts for fires that have created a great impact and risk on lands. Due to the magnitude of the Thomas Fire, the Watershed Team was created and then enhanced following the January 9th disaster. This team of technical experts further helped the County assess potential threats to life and property from future storms.