

Crews scramble to stabilize King Fire terrain

By Peter Hecht, Sacramento Bee

Engineering and erosion control crews faced a time paradox Wednesday in a scorched Sierra Nevada region.

For weeks since the devastating King fire burned through 97,717 acres of timberland and watershed north of Pollock Pines, multiple agencies launched a long-term project to protect water supplies and wildlife habitat from destruction due to burned mountain terrain being unable to handle seasonal rains. Agencies including the U.S. Forest Service and the Sacramento Municipal Utility District have been conducting helicopter "helimulching" flights, dropping tons of rice straw to hold fragile hillsides and promote regrowth.

They hope to resume the flights as soon as dry weather returns.

But with a major storm system barreling down, crews Wednesday shifted to more immediate concerns by building earthen berms to help prevent roadways from washing out and to keep sediment from fouling the upper American River and nearby tributaries.

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