

NATURE WORLD NEWS

Wildfires: How to Save The Forests

By Catherine Arnold Sep 23, 2015



In a recent commentary published in the journal *Science*, researchers from institutions including UC-Berkeley, University of Washington, and the U.S. Forest Service made suggestions for managing and controlling forest fires through methods that include dividing land into fire-management zones; and conducting controlled burns. (Photo : U.S. Army)

Forest fires have consumed nearly 9 million acres in the United States so far in 2015. Amid predictions that climate change will only bring drier conditions, a team of scientists described opportunities and made suggestions for the nation's forest and fire management systems, in a commentary published recently in the highly respected journal *Science*. It's very clear that our current policies aren't working," said Jerry Franklin, a professor of environmental and forest sciences at the University of Washington who is a co-author of the commentary. In *Science*, the researchers asked for more prescribed and managed burns. Such "controlled burns" minimize

non-native species and cause trees to grow back in a way that is less crowded and prone to burst into flames. Also in the suggestion list: increased tree thinning and less wildfire suppression in certain conditions. Parks Canada, as the scientists noted in a release, sections a landscape into specific fire-management zones. The scientists suggest in the release, then, that U.S. forest plans could use mechanical thinning methods and suppress wildfires near homes; conduct controlled burns and mechanical treatments in areas just outside the brink of wildlands and urban areas; let remote lands burn in a managed way when ignition occurs

naturally and conduct controlled burns to clear brush and tinder for fires.

By using the above zones, the scientists note that the U.S. could return huge tracts of U.S. forest -- including Washington and Oregon's eastern slope of the Cascades and good-sized parts of California's Sierra Nevada -- to a less ignitable state, as Franklin noted in the release. "There's a huge area of accessible forestlands we could restore to a much more resilient condition that would be much less prone to catastrophic fires," he said. Wildfire management was also brought to discussion by the recent release of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy. It is likely that within the next 10 years, most of the 155 national forests will start writing new plans and holding public forums for forest management, as a release noted.

The release also said that public resistance to controlled burns is beginning to shift. Others involved with the commentary included lead author Malcolm North of the U.S. Forest Service and University of California Davis; and fellow authors from Northern Arizona University, University of California Berkeley, The Wilderness Society and the Forest Service. "Management reform in the United States has failed, not because of policy, but owing to lack of coordinated pressure sufficient to overcome entrenched agency disincentives to working with fire," the authors wrote in the commentary, according to the release.

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<http://www.natureworldnews.com/articles/16959/20150923/wildfires-decrease.htm>