

Forest Management

Did you know..?

- 9.2 million acres burned last year, making it the 3rd worst fire season in the history of the United States
- That's a little bigger than the size of Massachusetts & Connecticut combined
- In 2012, there were slightly over \$1 billion in economic losses from wildfires
- Logging, wood, paper and cabinetry industries have lost 242,000 jobs, or roughly 23 percent of its workforce, since 2006
- A medium-sized fire can release 200,000 tons of CO₂, and if the burned trees are left to decompose, several times that amount will be emitted.

What does the bark beetle have to do with wildfires?

Since the outbreak in 1996, the bark beetle epidemic has severely damaged forests in Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wyoming.

In total it has destroyed or damaged over 41 million acres of pine forests. The epidemic has affected many miles of roads, paths and trails, created a severe fire hazard, and put essential water supplies at risk.

In addition to their visual impacts, bark beetle infestation impacts tourism and greatly increases the risk of catastrophic fires.

The summer of 2012 saw some of the worst fires on record as nearly 10 million acres across the country were torched. Healthy forests are vital to the livelihood of the millions of people in the West, and are critical for economic recovery. By returning to a proactive approach in fire prevention and forest management and putting control back in the hands of those who live and work in our forests to keep them thriving for generations to come.

Fires can be prevented with the proper forest management policies. Our forests used to have about 30-60 trees per acre. Now, we see upwards of 2,500 trees per acre. Combined with drought conditions, overcrowding of trees leave our forests full of fuel for devastating wildfires to spin out of control. If we start to allow timber harvest, our forests can return to healthy, sustainable trees per acre numbers.

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Another key practice that has fallen to the wayside is the 10 AM Control Policy, which dates back to 1935. The objective is to plan and provide the necessary resources to control a wildfire by 10 AM the following day. This policy enhanced the probability of early containment and control the following day. The 10 AM Control Policy also significantly reduced the overall cost of wildfires.

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Not only can wildfires cause harm to humans, they destroy the habitats of animals that make their homes in the forest. Wildfires do not distinguish between animals that are on the endangered species list and those who are not; wildfires impact all animals.

To the right is a map showing the endangered species critical habitat destroyed by wildfires from 2001 to 2011:

