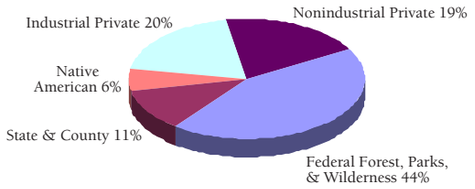
The **Washington Forest Protection Association (WFPA)** was founded in 1908 to protect private forestland from fire, until the State Department of Natural Resources took over this responsibility in the mid-1950s. Our members are large and small companies, individuals and families who grow, harvest and re-grow trees on more than 4 million acres of private forestland in Washington State.

WFPA works for balanced public policy so that its members can continue to practice forestry that is economically sound and environmentally sensitive, now and for generations to come.

State and private forest landowners actively manage their forests using appropriate silvicultural tools. Prescribed fire, mechanical thinning, brush removal and pruning improves the health of forests and the environment by decreasing the risk of catastrophic wildfire.

Washington Forestland -- 22 Million Acres



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Catastrophic Wildfire

Active forest management reduces the risk.

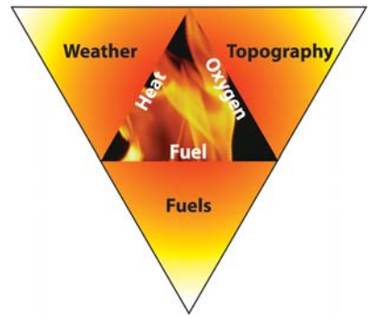
Washington Forest Protection Association

The Changing Role of Fire

Fire is a natural part of the ecosystem; however, the excessive buildup of "fuel" in our national forests is changing the beneficial role of fire into one of destruction. Foresters know that **active management of our forests**, such as thinning and prescribed burning, can reduce fire hazards by removing the small trees, underbrush, and dead wood which fuels catastrophic wildfire.

Despite their often lush, green appearance, the structure and composition of tree stands in our national forests have changed over the last century. Tree density is six to ten times greater than historical conditions. More small dead and dying trees form "fuel ladders" to the highly combustible crowns or tops of large trees. Subsequently, the risk of catastrophic fire is the most serious threat to the health and sustainability of our national forests today.

The elements of fire.
Removing excess fuels reduces the risk of fire.



Firefighters now report a frightening new breed of fire called "white-ash fires." Normally, fire will simply scorch a tree, but leave it alive. These new fires burn trees down to white ash, burning so intensely that they endanger the safety of firefighters and communities, threaten wildlife species, and sometimes cause long-lasting, irreversible damage to watersheds. There is no greater threat to clean air, water, fish and wildlife habitat than catastrophic wildfire. We must **actively manage our national forests**, before our future options burn up.

Mature, dry lodgepole pine in the Okanogan National Forest.

Fuel reduction is the single most important factor for reducing the intensity of today's catastrophic wildfires.

WASHINGTON FOREST PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

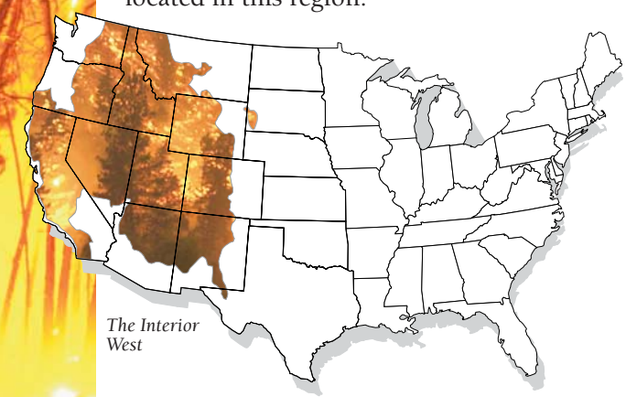
Suppression Era

The Great Fires of 1910, led to a public outcry for an aggressive policy of fire suppression. Efforts intensified in 1935 with the "10 a.m. Policy" of controlling all fires by 10 a.m. the next morning. While this new policy was difficult to implement, the United States Forest Service (USFS) did become highly effective at suppressing most fires throughout the next 50 years.

Natural Role of Fire

Prior to fire suppression, frequent, low-intensity surface fires regularly thinned the forests, keeping them clear of undergrowth. On average, every seven years 50% to 60% of the undergrowth was eliminated. These "frequent fire interval" forests are most common across the dry Interior West. Seventy percent of all national forests managed by the USFS are located in this region.

1909 Bitterroot National Forest, Idaho, USFS



The Interior West

Consequences of Fire Suppression

As a result of human activity, habitation and twentieth century fire suppression policies, we now have a hazardous over-accumulation of fuel in our national forests. One-third of the Interior West's national forests are now at a high risk of large, uncontrollable, catastrophic wildfire, which damages key ecosystem components, including soil.

According to academic and federal agency scientists, "***...in many of the Interior West forests, the costs and risks of inaction are greater than the costs and risks of remedial action.***"

We can't have a policy of fire suppression without a plan of action to reduce forest fuels. Decades of fire suppression have caused an excessive accumulation of fuel in our national forests. The number of acres burned in recent years has quadrupled due to the increasing number of large, intense fires. While only one percent of wildfires becomes catastrophic, these fires are responsible for more than 90% of the total acreage burned. The National Commission on Wildfire Disasters reports, "The size, intensity, destructiveness and cost of the wildfires of the 1980s and 1990s is no accident. It is an outcome of our attitudes and priorities."

Nationwide, the year 2000* was one of the most destructive forest fire seasons in U.S. history, costing $1.3 billion and burning an area double the ten-year average. Nearly 8.5 million acres, or 13,000 square miles of forest burned. This is equivalent to a two-mile wide strip of forest stretching from Seattle to Rome.

**2002 followed just behind the year 2000 as one of the worst fire seasons in 50 years, burning 7.2 million acres and costing $1.6 billion.*

Smokey Bear

As fire behavior began to change, the USFS recognized the need to change the message of its fire prevention icon, Smokey Bear. For the first time in almost 60 years, the wildfire prevention message was directed at adults instead of children. Today, messages include scientific information about the natural role fire plays in a healthy ecosystem and the need to carefully reintroduce fire back into the forest.

Bringing Back Fire

Recognizing the important role fires play in a healthy ecosystem, the USFS adopted a "Confine, Contain and Control Policy." Included in this strategy was a "let-burn" policy which allows lightening-caused fires to burn in some wilderness areas. The USFS had been experimenting with bringing back fire as a management tool with the use of prescribed fire programs since the 1950s, but did not formalize their policy of controlled burning to reduce fuel buildup until the mid-1970s.

Active Forest Management

Science supports the use of prescribed fire for reducing fuels in areas with low to moderate fuel buildup. In areas with an over-accumulation of fuels, thinning small trees and clearing brush followed by controlled burning are the most effective methods of reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire. Removing these excess fuels lowers fire intensity to a manageable level and reduces smoke emissions during burning.

Controlled Burning

Research shows that actively managing forests can restore ecosystem health and improve habitat quality by using management tools, such as prescribed fire, selective harvesting and thinning treatments.

We cannot turn our backs and let our national forests go up in smoke. Catastrophic fire is predictable and preventable. We must take an active role in reducing the risk before it's too late.

before thinning

thinning

after thinning

Catastrophic fire is predictable and preventable.