



ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

More Wildfires, More Focus on Resiliency

Wildfires are occurring with increasing frequency and intensity, spurred by warmer temperatures and longer droughts in many parts of the U.S. Wildfires put lives at risk and cause devastating destruction to agricultural lands, forests and grasslands. They destroy habitat and harm wildlife, and pollute waters with debris and ash. To protect ecosystems and the people who live in and rely on them, land-grant university researchers and Extension educators are determining best practices for preventing and recovering from wildfires.

EXAMPLES OF THIS WORK INCLUDE:

- Many privately-owned forests in dry southern Oregon are denser and have fewer fire-resistant trees than in the past. These factors can contribute significantly to the intensity and severity of wildfires. To reduce the risk, Extension in **Oregon** helped 30 landowners forge an agreement and obtain grants to restore and sustainably manage over 40,000 acres of forest. More than 4,000 acres have already undergone fire-risk reduction treatments, including timber harvest, forest thinning, disposal of woody debris from logging or storms, weed and invasive tree control and prescribed burning. If future fires do occur, these proactive actions will decrease their intensity, improve firefighter safety and make fire response more effective.
- After a deadly and destructive 2017 fire season, **California** Extension developed and widely delivered science-based information on fire recovery and resiliency to more than 700 workshop participants—an approach that will help reduce the likelihood of future catastrophic fires and improve land recovery if fires do occur. Extension educators helped local leaders understand how they can influence fire recovery through new policies, land-use planning and outreach campaigns. Workshops, websites and social media made residents aware of best practices for fire resiliency and recovery.
- Scientists from **multiple states** showed that strategic land-use planning not only reduces wildfire risk, but also reduces wildfire suppression costs.
- For several years after a fire, forage production remains much lower than normal. Documenting the amount and value of forage lost is an important part of filing insurance claims or requesting federal funds for recovery. **California** researchers created a guidebook and online tool to help ranchers accurately calculate forage loss and apply for assistance with recovery. These resources facilitate the restoration of grasslands that provide both forage for livestock and habitat for wildlife.

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