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WILDFIRE DILEMMA

Changes ahead in how the West's forests are managed

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

It'd be easy to assume the untamed appearance of the West's inland forests is timeless.

In reality, their current condition is often anything but normal by historic standards.

For many decades, large swaths of these forests have been untouched by wildfire — the driving force that shaped their structure and ecology for millennia.

"Today's landscape doesn't function anything like the landscape of 100 or 200 years ago," said Paul Hessburg, a research landscape ecologist at the U.S. Forest Service.

Without low-intensity fires periodically consuming the grasses, brush and small trees of the West's dry inland forests, they're now more densely packed with vegetation that



U.S. Forest Service

A prescribed burn is used to thin the understory of a forest without damaging the taller trees.

can fuel large wildfires like those that have raged across parts of the Northwest in recent years.

White and grand firs whose growth was typically stifled by frequent fires are now a more prominent component within forest stands, creating a "ladder" for flames to reach the canopy of ponderosa pines.

"Now, these landscapes are much less well-adapted to fire," Hessburg said. "You take fire out of the system, you radically change many forests fairly quickly. Fire adaptation occurs as a result of allowing frequent fire to occur."

As a result of long-term fire suppression in the arid West, there will inevitably

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'YOU TAKE FIRE OUT OF THE SYSTEM, YOU RADICALLY CHANGE MANY FORESTS FAIRLY QUICKLY. FIRE ADAPTATION OCCURS AS A RESULT OF ALLOWING FREQUENT FIRE TO OCCUR. ... FIRE AND SMOKE ARE COMING TO AN AREA NEAR YOU. HOW DO YOU WANT YOUR FIRE AND SMOKE?'

— Paul Hessburg, a research landscape ecologist at the U.S. Forest Service



George Plaven/Capital Press

Scott Seus, left, owner of Seus Family Farms in Tulelake, Calif., speaks with his father, Monte Seus, during planting of onion fields.

Oregon, Calif. farmers plan convoy to raise awareness of Klamath Basin water crisis

Organizers anticipate roughly 1,000 vehicles to participate

By GEORGE P LAVEN
Capital Press

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. — A tough year just keeps getting tougher for Scott Seus at Seus Family Farms in Tulelake, Calif.

Seus began planting onions, peppermint and spearmint last month. At the time, he expected the U.S. Bureau

of Reclamation would provide about 140,000 acre-feet of water to the Klamath Project, serving 230,000 acres of farmland including the Tulelake Irrigation District.

Though it was far from a full water supply, Seus said growers at least knew what to expect and could plan for the upcoming season. Or so they thought.

Soon afterward, Seus said the goal-

posts suddenly changed. A combination of drought and more water for endangered fish meant farms would be getting less, leaving some fields dry with millions of dollars worth of crops already in the ground.

Water shutoffs have happened before in the basin — in 2001, water was cut off in April leading to a bucket brigade in protest. That year was bad, Seus said, but this year might be even worse

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Farwest Show canceled during COVID-19

The largest nursery industry trade show in the West is postponed until August 2021

By SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN
Capital Press

The Farwest Show, the biggest nursery and green industry wholesale show in the West, is canceled because of COVID-19.

Industry leaders say the show will resume August 2021.

In 2019, the show drew about 400 exhibitors and more than 5,000 attendees from 44 states and 20 countries. Each year, the show has offered seminars, training sessions, keynote talks, continuing educa-



Oregon Association of Nurseries

The 2019 Farwest Show drew thousands of exhibitors and attendees from around the nation and world.

tion for professionals, showcases for new plant varieties, tours of Oregon nurseries and networking opportunities.

Last year, 37% of visitors came

from out of state and abroad. This year, inconsistent airlines, travel limitations and the governor's order to prohibit mass gatherings prompted OAN to cancel the show.

"We're trying to make up for the lost show, but I don't think there's a suitable replacement for it. There's nothing like face-to-face, handshake-agreement kind of interaction," said Jeff Stone, executive director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries, the organization that hosts the show.

Although many industry leaders say they are disappointed by the cancellation, Stone said he respects Oregon Gov. Kate Brown's decision not to permit events of that scale yet to keep the virus from spreading.

Many agricultural organizations with canceled events have opted to host virtual events, but Stone said OAN will not hold a virtual version of the trade show. He said this is to avoid competing with

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