

FIRE

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Now, Hessburg said, that patchwork has filled in. Instead of fires that burn one tree stand and stop at the next meadow or that remain on the ground below the tree canopies, the additional fuel creates hotter fires that climb into the treetops and burn from one to the next unimpeded in the dense stands.

The cause

The current conditions were not caused by a single factor, Hessburg said, but a variety of changes through the years that have culminated in today's megafires.

Before European settlement, Hessburg said American Indians would intentionally light fires in spring and fall. These first prescribed fires helped prevent larger blazes during the summer, he said.

In the mid-1800s, he said, European immigrants began grazing cattle, which reduced frequent fires by reducing grasses. With railroads came unintentional fire breaks that stopped the spread of low-intensity fires, he said.

After the Big Burn in Washington, Idaho and Montana in 1910 that burned 3 million acres and killed 87 people, Hessburg said fire became "public enemy No. 1."

These and other factors preventing small fires, coupled with a lack of understanding of the important role of fire on the forest, "worked together to create the current epidemic of trees, more trees than the landscape can support," Hessburg said.

The tree density not only increases the risk of fires, he said, but also makes the forest more susceptible to damage from in-



The Canyon Creek Complex fire explodes just across the valley from Prairie City on Aug. 26, 2015.

sects and disease.

But with current climate conditions, increasing temperatures and drought, Hessburg said forests are primed to burn.

Current fire seasons are 40-80 days longer than they were 50 years ago, he said, and even the most conservative estimates for the future are dire.

The solution

Despite the difficulties ahead, Hessburg said there are tools and options available to mitigate some of the risks.

He said, while wildfires are inevitable — and, in fact, necessary for many species of plants and animals — maintaining fire-adapted communities, ensuring safe, effective fire responses and creating fire-resilient landscapes would help reduce the damage.

"We can restore much of the power of that patchwork," he said.

With more homes being built in treed areas adjacent to forests — known as the wildland urban interface — Hessburg said it is important for communities to be prepared for wildfires. Organizations such as Firewise, which has several local communities participating, provide free help to people who are interested.

To create resilient forests by reducing fuels and returning the land to more natural conditions, prescribed burning and logging — or mechanical

thinning — are two of the best options, he said, but both face opposition.

After clearcut logging of the past, he said many are "timid" about thinning projects, despite the fact current sustainable logging practices are far more ecologically sound. Logging reduces the fuel load while providing an economic benefit to the communities that house Forest Service employees.

Prescribed burning allows forest managers to reintroduce fire on the landscape in a low-intensity setting, providing the benefits of fire similar to when the forest was a patchwork of stands and meadows with less risk of catastrophic crown fires.

However, prescribed fires can only be ignited when weather conditions are expected to be safe and conducive to the operation, and even when those conditions are met, state smoke management goals often prevent prescribed fires from being permitted. Hessburg said prescribed burns are regulated as a controllable nuisance because the smoke can exacerbate health problems, but when the much larger wildfires inevitably erupt, the smoke is far worse.

"There's no future without lots of fire and smoke," he said. "How do you want your fire? How do you want your smoke? How do you want your forests in the future?"

REFORM

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"We've got to deal with these forests," Walden said.

A version of the Resilient Federal Forests Act has passed the House each of the last four years. It focuses on measures to speed up the pace of restoration, providing categorical exclusions for certain projects to expedite environmental review.

Projects that would qualify for categorical exclusion include hazardous fuels reduction, salvaging dead trees, protecting watersheds or improving wildlife habitat. The bill caps project sizes at 10,000 acres, or 30,000 acres if they are developed by a multi-intersect collaborative group.

The bill also directs the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a pilot program to resolve lawsuits filed against forest management through arbitration, rather than heading to court, and would prevent plaintiffs from recovering their attorney fees in such cases under the Equal Access to Justice Act.

Opponents of the legislation, however, claim it would severely undermine environmental review and cater to the interests of the timber industry. Steve Pedery, conservation director for Oregon Wild, de-

scribed the bill as a wish list for timber lobbyists.

"It's really about maximizing the profits of logging corporations over the health of our public lands, and the ability for Americans to enjoy them," Pedery said.

Specific to Eastern Oregon, the Resilient Federal Forests Act would allow logging of trees more than 21 inches in diameter. Individual forest management plans would also no longer be subject to the National Environmental Protection Act — the Blue Mountains Forest Plan, which includes the Umatilla, Walla-Walla-Whitman and Malheur forests, is 13 years overdue for its latest revision.

Speaking Sept. 14 to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Walden urged support for the bill as a means to jump-start forestry reform.

"Year after year, we have catastrophic wildfires on federal lands, some of which have been set aside and managed in a way that they have no management," Walden said. "So if you want to do something that is extraordinarily important, join us in reforming the way we manage our precious public lands and federal forests to reduce the fuel loads."

As for fire borrowing, a bipartisan group of senators has introduced the Wildfire Dis-

aster Funding Act to ensure the firefighting budget does not eat into the fire prevention budget, and allow projects to proceed with greater financial resources.

In the same joint statement with Wyden, Merkley said it is time to reverse what has become a vicious cycle.

"The way we fund wildfire suppression today is counterproductive and crazy," Merkley said. "As this fire season has proven all too vividly, robbing from forest health and fire prevention programs to pay for suppression only creates a vicious cycle of bigger and bigger fires."

The bill would work by capping the firefighting budget at the most recent 10-year average, with any additional funding for fighting wildfires coming from federal disaster relief coffers. That would place wildfires more in line with other natural disasters, such as the hurricanes that have devastated parts of Texas and Florida.

Supporters include other Western lawmakers from across the political aisle, including Idaho Republicans Mike Crapo and Jim Risch; Colorado Republican Cory Gardner and Democrat Michael Bennet; California Democrat Dianne Feinstein; Washington Democrat Maria Cantwell; and Utah Republican Orrin Hatch.

DRIVING

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offender who did not cause a crash would face a Class B violation, with a presumptive fine of \$260 but a maximum fine of \$1,000. Those first-time offenders could have their fine suspended if they complete a course of safety classes within four months, but the violation

will stay on their record.

Second-time offenders face a Class A traffic violation, on par with driving more than 30 miles per hour over the speed limit and carrying a presumptive fine of \$435 but a maximum of \$2,000. Any additional violations become a Class B misdemeanor, resulting in a criminal record for the perpetrator and up to a \$2,500 fine and six months in jail.

There are a few exemptions to the rules. A person can call 9-1-1 while driving during an emergency if there is no one else in the vehicle who can make the call. Drivers can also use a single touch to activate a hands-free device. School bus drivers, commercial truck drivers, emergency responders and utility workers can use a two-way handheld radio in the scope of their employment.

Church Services In Grant County



Historic Remnant Church
 Preparing for Jesus to come
 Meets Saturday at Mt. Vernon Grange
 Sabbath School.....9:30 am
 Church Services.....11:00 am
 541-620-0340

St. Thomas Episcopal Church
 Morning Prayer.....10 am
 (1st, 3rd, 5th Sundays)
 Eucharist & Sunday School.....10 am
 (2nd & 4th Sundays)
 139 S. Washington, Canyon City
 541-620-1436

Prairie Baptist Church
 238 N. McHaley St. Prairie City
 Pastor David Hoeffner
 541-820-3696
 www.prairie-baptist-church.com
 Sunday School for all ages 9:00 am
 Sunday morning worship 10:30 am
 Awana (Oct.-Apr.) 3:00 pm
 Youth Group 5:30 pm

Cornerstone Christian Fellowship
 139 N.E. DAYTON STREET, JOHN DAY
 541-575-2180
 Sunday Worship Service 10 am
 Pastor Levi Manitsas
 cornerstonejohnday@gmail.com

New Life Bible Church
 2 Corinthians 5:17
 Every Sunday in the L.C. Community Center
 (Corner of Second & Allen)
 Contact Pastor Ed Studtmann at 541-421-3888 • Begins at 4:00pm

MT. VERNON PRESBYTERIAN Community Church
 SUNDAY SERVICE.....9 am
 SUNDAY SCHOOL.....9 am
 541-932-4800
 EVERYONE WELCOME

John Day Valley Mennonite Church
 Meeting every Sunday at Mt. Vernon Grange Hall
 Sunday School.....9:30 a.m.
 Sunday Morning Worship...10:50 a.m.
 Pastor Leland Smucker
 Everyone Welcome • 541-932-2861

VICTORY BAPTIST CHURCH
 KJV Independent
 Fundamental • Premillennial
 Terence K. Crabb, Pastor
 A Bible-believing Church
 "He that hath the Son hath life..." 1 John 5:12
 Sunday School 9:45 am • Sunday Preaching 11:00 am
 Junior Church 11:00 am • Sunday Evenings 3:30 pm
 Wednesday Bible Study & Master Club 7:00 pm
 Saturday Men's Prayer Meeting 7:00 pm
 108 S. Washington Street, Canyon City
 541-575-2688 or 541-575-0844

JOHN DAY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
 Sunday Worship • 9AM
 (541) 575-1326
 johndayUMC@gmail.com
 126 NW Canton, John Day
 Like us on Facebook!

St. Elizabeth of Hungary Catholic Church
 Corner of S Canyon Blvd and SW 2nd
 Mon. - Fri. Mass - 12:05 pm
 Saturday Mass - 5:00 pm
 Sunday Mass - 9:00 am

Confession: Saturday 3:30-4:30 pm
 Anytime by appointment 541-575-1459

St. Anne
 Monument - Sunday at 12:30 pm
St. Katherine
 Dale
 1st & 3rd Sundays at 2:30 pm
Office Hours
 Monday - Friday 9 am - 12 Noon

Living Word Christian Center
 Hwy 26 Mt. Vernon
 Celebration of Worship Sundays 5:30pm
 Youth: 0-6th grade
 Midweek Service Thursdays 6:30pm
 Youth: 0-6th grade
 Overcomer's Outreach Friday's 7:00pm
 House on the Lawn A Christ Centered, 12 Step Recovery Support Group
 Pastor Sharon Miller
 541-932-4910
 www.livingwordcc.com

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE
 Sunday School.....9:30 am
 Sunday Worship Service.....10:45 am
 Sunday Evening Service.....6:00 pm
 Children & Teen Activities
 SMALL GROUPS CALL FOR MORE INFO
 Weekdays: Sunshine Christian School
 Pastor Randy Johnson
 521 E. Main • John Day • 541-575-1895
 www.johndaynazarene.com

Redeemer Lutheran Church
 Come Worship with us at
 627 SE Hillcrest, John Day
 1st & 3rd Sunday Worship & Communion10 am
 2nd, 4th & 5th Sunday Worship10 am
 Wednesday Evening Bible Study.....6 pm
 For information: 541-575-2348

Seventh-Day Adventist Church
 SATURDAY SERVICES
 JOHN DAY
 110 Valley View Dr. - 541-575-1216
 Head Elder.....541-575-2914
 Bible Classes (all ages).....9:30 am
 Worship.....11 am
 LONG CREEK
 E. Main Street - 541-421-3033
 Head Elder.....421-3468
 Bible Classes (all ages).....2 pm
 Worship.....3 pm
Tune into
3 ANGELS BROADCASTING
 KSP1 98.1 FM
 Blue Mountain Cable, Channel 2
 Antenna; Digital Channel 15 & UHF Channel 8

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
 Sunday School..... 10 am
 Church.....11 am
 Afternoon Service..... 1 pm
 No Mid-week Services
Pastor Jesse Gosnell
 300 W. Main, John Day
 541-575-1355

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
 Sunday School.....9:45 am
 Sunday Worship.....11 am
 Sunday Evening Bible talk.....6:30 pm
 Saturday Men's Study.....7 pm
Full Gospel- Come Grow With Us
 541-575-1202 Church
 311 NE Dayton St, John Day
 Pastor Al Altnow
 www.fcjohnday.com