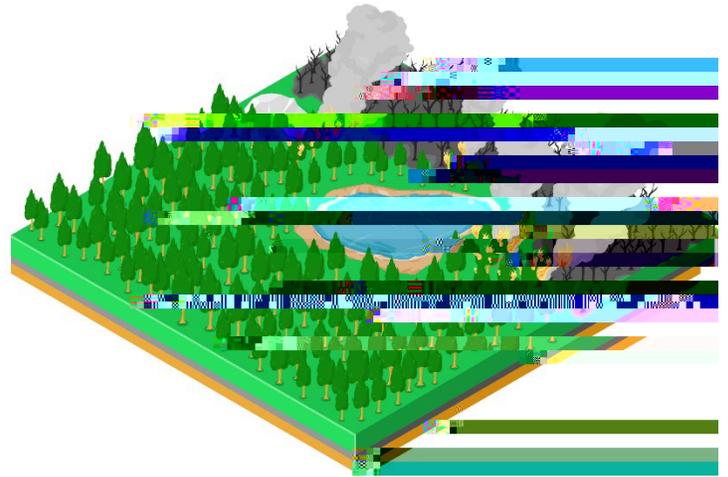


HOW WE DO IT: Managing Forest Fires



Fire is a natural disturbance in many forest ecosystems. Depending on the region and type of forest, wildfires have often played an important ecological role in opening up space on the forest floor, returning nutrients to the soil and sparking new cycles of growth and biodiversity. However, changing climate conditions — coupled with long-term patterns of fire suppression and human development into fire-prone areas — are leading to an increasing number of wildfires. Some of these fires can become uncharacteristically large and severe and have the potential to cause catastrophic damage to forests, watersheds, wildlife and communities. That's why it is essential that we address fire risk as much as possible through careful management of our forests, proactive outreach and engagement with communities, and close partnerships with state and federal agencies and other forest landowners.



KEY POINTS

- **Fire has always been a natural part of the landscape, though fire frequency and severity vary widely by region and forest type.**

Drier forests on the eastern slopes of the Cascades in Oregon and Washington, for instance, are often dominated by ponderosa pine and have evolved with more frequent fires of low to moderate intensity. The probability of fire in these forests is greater, even as their severity has generally been lower.¹ In historically wetter forests, such as those on the Cascades' highly productive western slopes, fire is still a natural part of the ecosystem even though those environments have typically seen fires only at intervals of more than 200 years. These forests tend to grow more quickly and densely, so the fires that do reach them are able to feed off naturally heavy fuels, as well as trees that have not evolved to resist fire quite as well. So while the overall probability of fires in westside forests has been lower, the potential severity of fires that do occur can be higher.

- **Well-managed forests are less susceptible to fire.**

We cannot prevent all fires, but the proactive steps we take to manage fire risk in our forests — from clearing excess fuels on the forest floor to building fire breaks and periodically thinning smaller trees — support overall forest health and can play an important role in reducing the frequency and intensity of fires that do occur.

- **Active forest management is not just about prevention and mitigation — it can also be a powerful force to accelerate forest and landscape recovery after a fire and other natural disasters.**

We have the resources and expertise to replant where appropriate as quickly as possible following a major disruption, and we have proven — including after the Mount St. Helens eruption in 1980 and the 2020 fires in Oregon² — that we can jump-start regeneration and more swiftly rehabilitate forests. As part of our recovery efforts following the Oregon fires, we prioritized

_____ tree buffers along sensitive streams and connecting tributaries. Many of these streams feed municipal water systems and help provide clean drinking water for up to 100,000 residents in surrounding communities; others provide critical habitat for wildlife, including salmon. Targeted replanting in these areas can help reduce sediment delivery to waterways and also minimize potential detrimental effects to stream temperature and aquatic ecosystems.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – *continued*

Is the risk of fire greater in unmanaged forests?

From a fuel perspective, yes. Throughout the 1900s, many land managers, including the U.S. government, enforced str