

Only You & Management Can Prevent Forest Fires

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The threat of and war on terrorism has had to share the news spotlight recently with a domestic problem that has only in recent years become an annual problem - runaway forest fires.

The public has come to accept them as an inevitable and unavoidable fact of life. Those of us old enough to know better are aware that it was not always the case. We should be asking why it has become so and what we can do to prevent them.

With my training and experience in forestry, and fire control in particular, the answer is obvious. Only one news channel has had the guts, integrity, honesty or common sense to learn the answer. It's Fox News and anchor Bill O'Reilly, who is unafraid of being politically incorrect by asking the hard questions as to why today's social problems exist.

Forest fire protection is a necessary and integral part of forest management. It is only one of the many facets considered necessary to insure a balanced and healthy forest, one that provides optimum use of a valuable renewable natural resource.

To that end, this nation has educated and trained scientists and technicians who know best how to achieve that end. Federal, state and private agencies employ them to apply the practical utilization of their knowledge. Why then are forest fires becoming a problem on a scale that they never were before?

In large part it's because these scientists and technicians are prevented from putting their knowledge and training to work. The bulk of public-owned forestland in this nation is not being managed at all. The experts are prevented from doing their job by blind ideology that is based on no proven facts and driven by powerful elitist self-described environmental groups.

Managed forests are healthy forests from which society derives optimum benefits instead of adverse effects such as those experienced from large uncontrollable fires.

My first job with the forest service in Idaho was fire prevention in the Nez Pierce National Forest. I was in charge of a crew of 17 college students who piled logging slash on slopes too steep to work with machinery. The piles were burned in the fall when the ground was covered with snow. The purpose was to interrupt the continuity of fuel on the forest floor.

The cost was nowhere near as great as the savings in lives, homes, timber, jobs, recreational benefits, water quality enhancement, wildlife habitat and less atmospheric pollution by millions of tons of burning fossil fuels.

It's amazing to me that anyone would even try to sell the public on the benefits of not at least attempting to mitigate the harmful effects of uncontrolled fire. Fire control practices and all other well thought out forest management practices are good for the economy, well being, safety and pleasure of the nation and the environment.

I reviewed a book awhile back, *The Death of Common Sense*. It concerned matters such as the stupidity of believing that the forests of this or any other nation should be left to shift for themselves.

Wake up America and tell these Volvo and Saab driving elitists with kayaks on the roof that you are not going to take it anymore.