

Fire Today

Fire is a dominant ecological force shaping ecosystems across the United States. Too much, too little or the wrong kind of fire can have negative consequences for natural communities and people who depend on them.

Land managers increasingly understand the role fire plays in a variety of ecosystems and use it as a tool when and where appropriate.

- On average, nearly half of the United States burned at least once every 35 years before European settlement.
- Many of these fires were **low intensity** and helped clear underbrush, maintain open forests and improve wildlife habitat.
- As a result of fire suppression, many ecosystems are increasingly unhealthy and could **benefit from the right kind of fire**.

The safety of local communities is of ultimate importance when fire is reintroduced. When land managers and communities work together, **people can coexist with the right kind of fire** at the same time that **nature benefits** from natural cycles.



Fire can help maintain healthy landscapes and the habitat of many species, for example, (clockwise from top left) bison, camas lily, ponderosa pine and red-cockaded woodpecker.

References

United States Forest Service. 2006.
LANDFIRE Fire Regime Groups:
USDA Forest Service/Fire Science Laboratory,
Rocky Mountain Research Station, Missoula MT.

Also:
www.tncfire.org
www.landfire.gov
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The Nature Conservancy 

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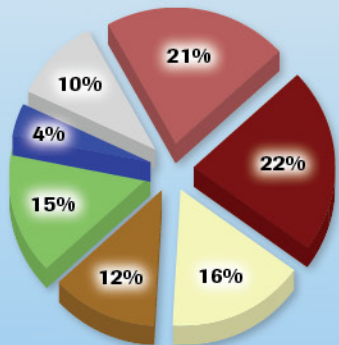
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WILDLAND FIRE IN THE UNITED STATES THEN AND NOW



Wildland Fire: Pre-European Settlement Period

Fire Was a Dominant Force in the United States
Prior to European Settlement



- <= 35 Year Fire Return Interval, Low and Moderate Severity
- <= 35 Year Fire Return Interval, High Severity
- 35-200 Year Fire Return Interval, Low and Moderate Severity
- 35-200 Year Fire Return Interval, High Severity
- >200 Year Fire Return Interval, Any Severity
- Water
- Other