

Forest Fire Facts

Did you know: fire in a dense conifer forest will travel ½ mph and can burn 15 acres after an hour? Scary? Maybe not so bad. Fire in “dense conifer reproduction” (dense young “doghair” lodgepole that takes over five or ten years after a clearcut) spreads at 1 ¾ mph and can burn 650 acres after an hour. But the real kicker: the grasses that dominate before that can spread 4 ½ mph and burn up to 3000 acres in an hour. Figures courtesy of a FireSafe Montana “Living with Fire” pamphlet <https://firesafemt.org/img/LivingwFireFSM20091.pdf> similar to those of the Pacific Northwest Wildfire Coordinating Council and other Western states.. Why cite other states’ pamphlets? The comparable ones distributed here omit those figures. Wonder why?

“Forest Harvest Can Increase Subsequent Forest Fire Severity”

https://www.fs.usda.gov/psw/publications/documents/psw_gtr208en/psw_gtr208en_525-534_stone.pdf a Forest Service/University of Idaho paper concluded that “Harvesting timber does not translate simply into reducing fire risk.” and “Our results show that, perhaps counter intuitively, heavy harvest can increase subsequent fire severity.” after finding clearcut lands burned more severely than less heavily logged land. But our Dillon Ranger District continues to push a simple “fuels reduction” mantra in pursuing more clearcut projects. Wonder why?

“What is the Relationship Between Deforestation and Forest Fires?”

<https://wfca.com/wildfire-articles/deforestation-and-forest-fires/>

a Western Fire Chiefs Association web page says: “Deforestation contributes to increased fire risk in surrounding woodland. Reducing tree cover and ground vegetation dries out forests, especially tropical rainforests. This leads to a greater risk of fire in the area around a deforested zone.” Based on the Amazon, but apropos elsewhere. Yet our local fire chiefs continue to support the Dillon Ranger District’s deforestation projects. Wonder why?