Wizard Fire Public Tour

US Forest Service

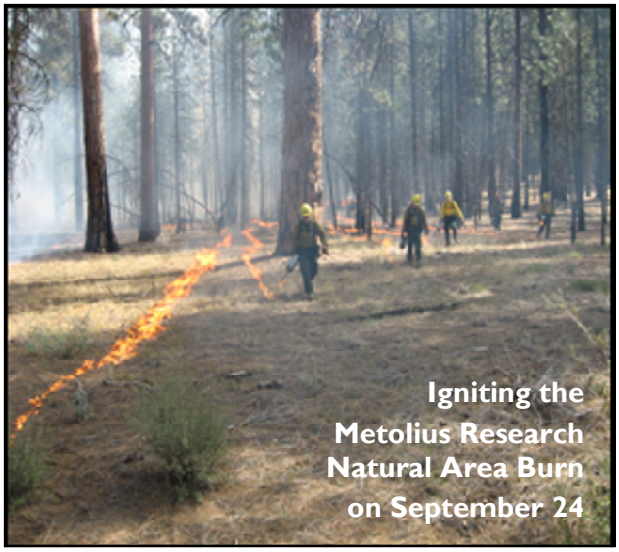
Sisters Ranger District

October 2008

The Wizard Fire - What happened?

Thank you for joining our field tour. We are here to answer your questions and view the Wizard Fire. Here are some details:

- A prescribed fire was started on September 24th at noon.
- It was a 30 acre prescribed fall burn in the Metolius Research Natural Area.
- The area had been burned 3 times before in the past 20 years. The one hour burn went well.
- The next day around 1pm, it escaped control lines during the patrol phase and burned north and east up Green Ridge.
- The Forest Service is very concerned about the escape of a prescribed fire.
- A review is in progress to understand the factors that led to the escape and to identify lessons that can be learned to reduce the risk of future escapes.



Igniting the Metolius Research Natural Area Burn on September 24

Wizard Fire—By the Numbers

Total Acres Burned = 1,847

Burnout Area ~1,000 acres
(The burnout was a low intensity fire lit to secure fire lines)

Days to Containment = 9

Suppression Cost = $ 4 million

Burned Area Emergency Rehab Request = $ 19,000
(for hazard trees & invasive plant monitoring)

Burn Intensity– How hot was the fire?
How many trees died?

Low (Most trees are alive) =
1,179 acres or 64%

Moderate (Mixed, 25-75% are dead) =
436 acres or 24%

High (More than 75% are dead) =
231 acres or 13%

What's Next for the Wizard Fire Area?

Danger Trees

The District will evaluate the area for hazardous trees that could threaten public safety. Trees will be dropped and left as wildlife habitat, used in fish habitat projects, or sold.

Invasive Plants or Noxious Weed Monitoring

Weeds or invasive plants can expand rapidly after wildfires. Next summer, Botanists will survey roads, firelines, and safety zones to detect new starts and hand pull any weeds that are found.

Fire Ecologist Lauren Miller observes fire behavior during the burnout operation on October 1st.

What is Prescribed Fire?

Prescribed fires are intentionally ignited under many specific site conditions including: temperature, humidity, wind, and fuel moistures.

They are generally ignited in a pattern of narrow strips that burn a short distance before reaching a previously burned area so the fire is of lower intensity and more easily controlled.

Prescribed fires are commonly ignited with drip torches carried by people or mounted on the back of all terrain vehicles.

Why do you have to burn?

Fire is a natural part of our forest ecosystems. The process of fire helps create and maintain habitat for wildlife and plant species and breaks down forest debris into useable nutrients.

Fires thin forests naturally by killing small trees. Most prescribed fires are ignited after mechanical thinning treatments.

Prescribed fires are strategically located to restore forests and protect communities and resources. They reduce surface fuels and help create defensible space around homes and other resource values to be protected.

There are always risks associated with managing fire.

The Forest Service burns thousands of acres a year without incident.

The Sisters Ranger District has had 2 escaped prescribed fires in the past 10 years.

Prescribed Burning on the Deschutes National Forest from 1999-2008

Sisters Ranger District

Prescribed Fire Ignitions:

130

Average 13/year

Area Underburned:

7,526 acres

Average 753/year

Deschutes National Forest

Prescribed Fire Ignitions:

325

Average 33/year

Area Underburned:

32,876 acres

Average 3,288/year

Fall versus Spring Burns

Historically, most fires were started by lightning in mid to late summer.

However, for areas which have experienced over one hundred years of fire exclusion, the spring season usually provides a better combination of weather and humidities to begin burning the accumulation of forest debris.

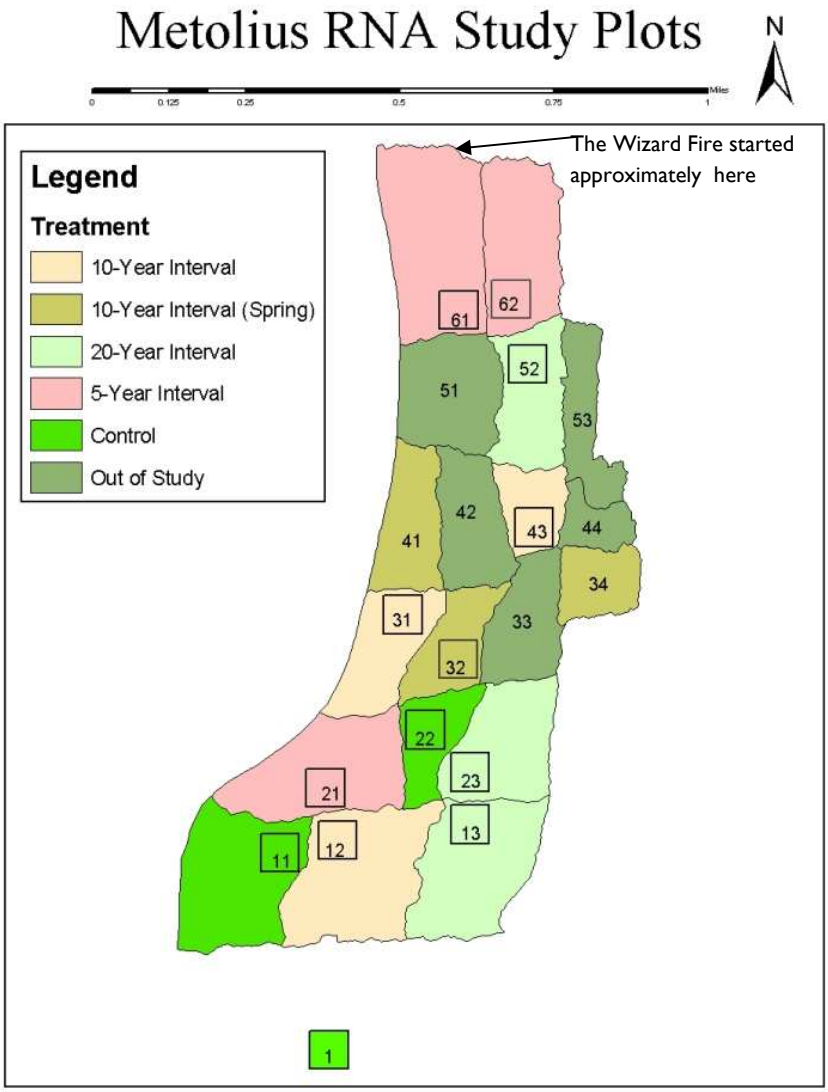
It is our goal to create conditions where more fall ignitions are possible.

Forest ecosystems have adapted over thousands of years to later season fires.

Spring and fall burns have different effects on components of forest ecosystems. Spring burns can affect actively nesting breeding birds, other wildlife or plants and can cause damage to roots and tree foliage.

Fall burns can consume large snags and down logs, which are important habitats. Large snags can be scarce in some areas due to past harvest.

Studying Old Growth Forests and Fire in the Metolius Research Natural Area



In 1928, the Deschutes National Forest recommended the protection of 640 acres of forest in the Metolius Basin as a "yellow pine museum". Three years later, in 1931, the Metolius Research Natural Area (RNA) was established, protecting 1,400 acres of old growth pine forest for scientific study.

In 1987, in an initial study of fire ecology in the RNA , scientist Joyce Borke estimated the forests in the Metolius RNA burned at low intensities on a natural fire return interval of every 4-11 years before fire suppression began in the early 1900's.

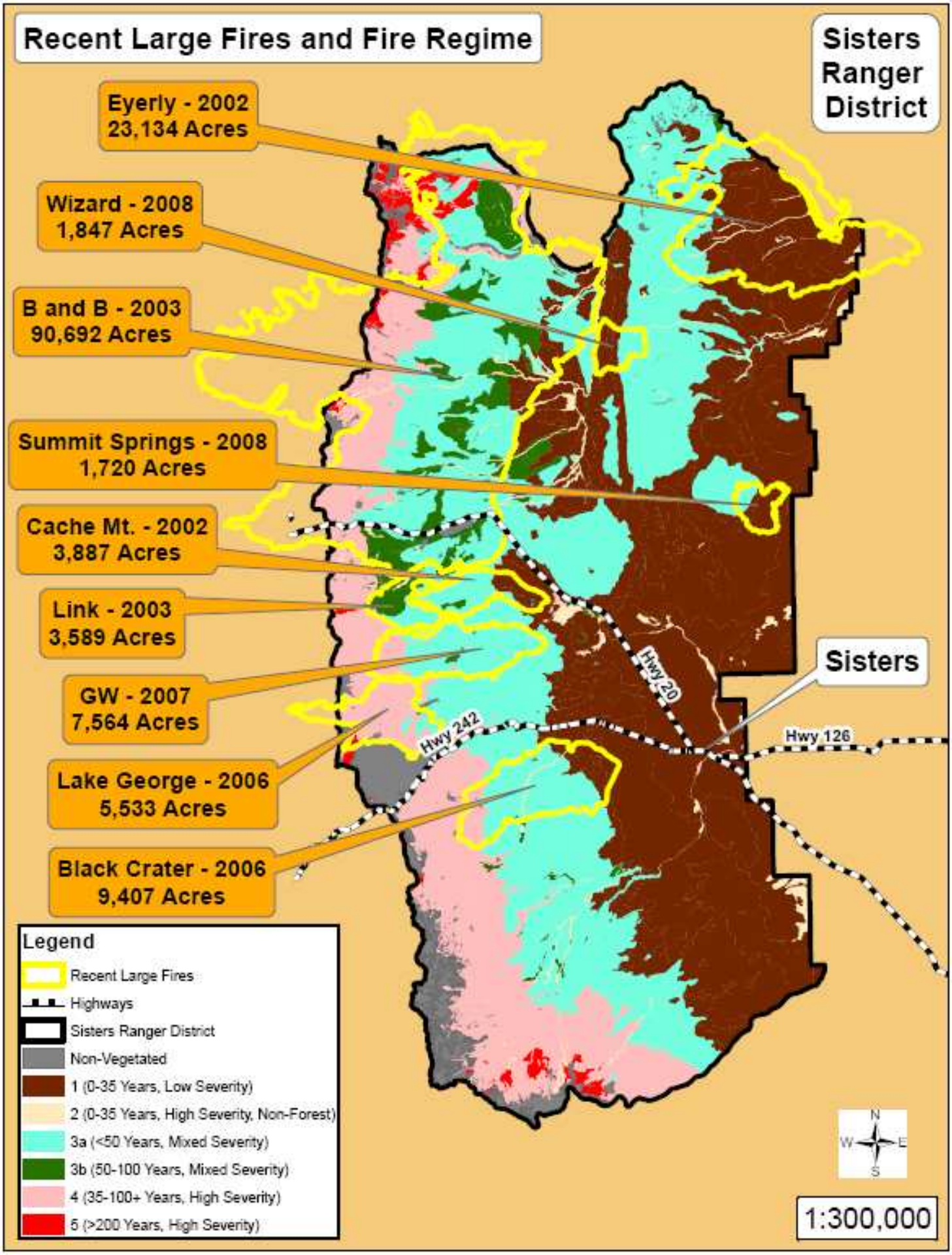
The 1988 Metolius RNA Management Plan by Fuels Planner Rod Bonacker recognized the role of fire in maintaining natural succession in the RNA and began planning prescribed fire as a management tool to protect, preserve, and restore the vegetation type for which the RNA was originally established. The plan divided the RNA into cells.

In 1997 a Study Plan by scientists Andy Youngblood and Gregg Riegel put the cells on a fire rotation to assess effects of different rotations and seasons of fire on tree biology, plant species diversity, tree distribution and other ecological factors.

Metolius Research Natural Area Studies

Studies in the Metolius RNA have produced over 50 scientific publications on topics such as carbon sequestration, historic drought events, tree physiology, old growth stand structure, understory plant responses to fire, wildlife ecology, soil biology, and fire ecology.

These studies help forest managers better predict the effects of our management actions. We work toward restoring the fire resilient large tree forests that have been valued by the public for many years and are a trademark of Central Oregon.


Recent Large Fires and Fire Regime
Sisters Ranger District
Eyerly - 2002
23,134 Acres
Wizard - 2008
1,847 Acres
B and B - 2003
90,692 Acres
Summit Springs - 2008
1,720 Acres
Cache Mt. - 2002
3,887 Acres
Link - 2003
3,589 Acres
GW - 2007
7,564 Acres
Lake George - 2006
5,533 Acres
Black Crater - 2006
9,407 Acres
Sisters
Hwy 20
Hwy 242
Hwy 126
Legend
Recent Large Fires
Highways
Sisters Ranger District
Non-Vegetated
1 (0-35 Years, Low Severity)
2 (0-35 Years, High Severity, Non-Forest)
3a (<50 Years, Mixed Severity)
3b (50-100 Years, Mixed Severity)
4 (35-100+ Years, High Severity)
5 (>200 Years, High Severity)
N
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