



FORESTS WITH A
FUTURE



Protecting Old Growth Trees,
Wildlife and Communities in
the Sierra Nevada.



When wildfires come, the Sierra Nevada must endure.

Sierra Nevada forests face increasing catastrophic wildfires which destroy old growth forests, wildlife habitat and local communities. Conditions have continued to worsen. Join this campaign to preserve our heritage.

Good fires, bad fires

Fire is natural to the forest. But not the kind of fire that burns so hot, and shoots up so high, it destroys everything. That kind of intense fire, laying waste old growth trees and wiping out the precious places where wildlife lives, is *not* natural.

Historically the forests of the Sierra Nevada had fewer trees and less underbrush. When wildfire came, it burned low and slow, removing small vegetation and “cleaning” the forest “floor.” This kind of fire was a natural part of the ecosystem, helping old growth trees to survive.

Today’s forests, dense with green, may seem beautiful, but in fact are deadly. Fire suppression over many decades has allowed vegetation to grow into a dense dangerous mess. Our old growth forests are choking with brush, tinder-dry debris, and dead trees which make the risk of catastrophic wildfires high.

We need future forests more like past forests

The forests of the future must become more like the forests of the past. There should be open stands of large trees, so that when fire comes, as it surely will, it burns lower and slower. Wildfire need not destroy old growth trees, wildlife and local communities in a well managed forest.

A Campaign – in forest time

Restoring the entire forest to its former safer state, with fewer trees and less underbrush, would be a gargantuan task. Right now, protecting communities, old growth trees and wildlife through better managing how and where wildfires burn, is the goal.

Campaigns are often considered short efforts, but in “forest time” we are looking at decades, adapting our approaches and measuring results over the next fifty years. The next three to five years are critical, however.



*Good fire –
low and slow.*



*Bad fire –
hot, high and deadly.*

Forests With A Future Campaign

This campaign expects to reduce acres lost to catastrophic wildfires more than 30% within the next fifty years. We also expect the habitat of wildlife, such as the spotted owl, and old growth forest areas to double in the same period.



1909



1948



1958



1968



1979



1989

Increasing Density



Methods to reduce fire damage

Fire itself is a method to reduce the highly flammable dense brush and trees in forests – although in many areas now fire is too risky to use. Even a small fire can explode out of control, where vegetation is dense. Prescribed burns can only be used with extreme care.

Thinning some trees and clearing underbrush and “slash” (small branches left after tree thinning) is expensive but must be done in key areas. Around homes and communities, is the top priority. Clearing brush and thinning trees in strategic sites where wildfires are most likely due to the density of vegetation, terrain, and wind patterns, will slow down these fires.

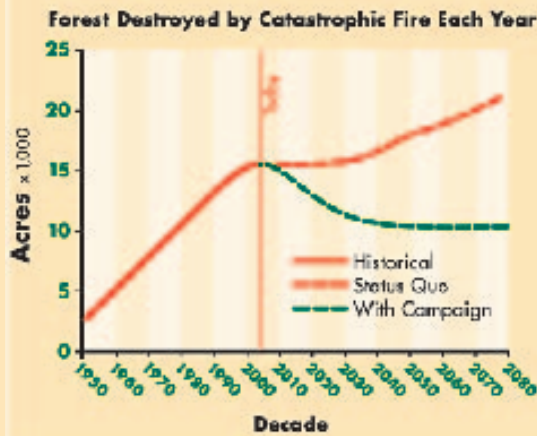
There are about 90 million trees measuring 20 to 30 inches in diameter in the Sierra Nevada. About 183,000, or 0.2%, of these will be thinned each year as part of an approach tailored to the requirements of each local forest. Thinning these trees serves two purposes –

reducing biomass in strategic locations and selling this timber to offset some of the costs of making the forests more fire safe.

The campaign will adapt these and other methods to meet the specific needs of each forest watershed, with scientists and professional foresters monitoring the effect on old growth trees, wildlife, and wildfires.

Focusing the Sierra Nevada Forest Plans

Sierra Nevada forest plans, which provided the basis of this campaign, have evolved over the last decade with the input of hundreds of scientists, forest professionals, and the public, as knowledge and practical experience has deepened. After the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment was released in 2001, Forest Service District Rangers, responsible for managing the forest to prevent catastrophic wildfires, found that the amendment needed to be improved because they were not able to accomplish the necessary



If nothing new is done

The graph shows what would happen if the management of Sierra Nevada forests were left at “status quo” and not focused into this campaign.

In short, wildfires would increase, and over time, wildlife habitat would decrease due to increasing fire damage. And the effect of increased wildfires on local communities could be disastrous.

The forests of the future must become more like the forests of the past.

“fuels reduction” projects of clearing brush and thinning forests.

In January 2004, the Forest Service improved the plan to better protect old growth trees, wildlife and local communities from catastrophic wildfires.

This latest process involved scientists and forestry experts, together with concerned organizations and individuals. We will continue to utilize this treasure of professional knowledge and expertise, and further public input, as we adapt our methods, and evaluate the results.

Details of the improved plan can be found in the Record of Decision, Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, January 21, 2004, available on line at www.fs.fed.us/r5/snfpa.

Weighing the costs

Presently, an estimated \$340 million is spent in the Sierra Nevada each year for forest management, and for preventing and suppressing wildfires.

The cost of thinning the present forest to be more like the forest of the past, even only in strategic sites is huge. A small part of the cost will be offset by any timber sales which can be achieved by thinning trees less than 30 inches in diameter. Although only a few trees larger than 20 inches in diameter will be thinned on each acre treated, these may generate nearly \$80 million each year to help pay for removal of economically worthless, but highly flammable brush.

The Forest Service, in an effort to wisely use its share of precious tax dollars, is calling upon all those concerned about wildfires to support these actions.

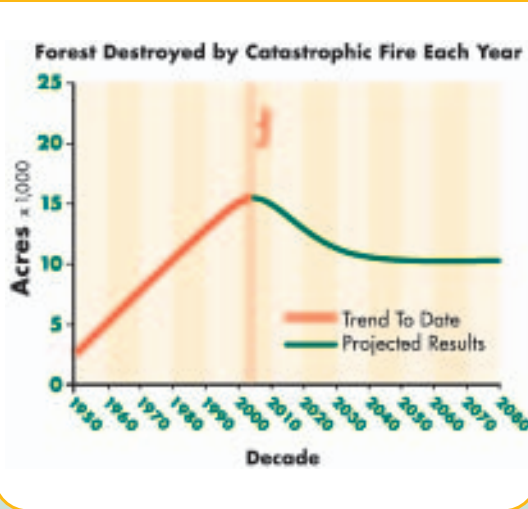
Forests With A Future Campaign

Reduce catastrophic wildfires.

Increase protection of old growth trees, wildlife and communities.

Fire

Acres burned by severe wildfires are projected to be reduced by more than 30% within the next 50 years.



Old Growth Trees

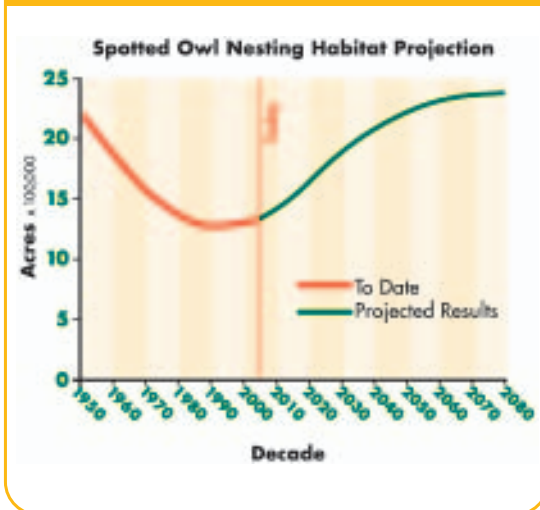
Acres of large trees are projected to double over the next 50 years.



You can help achieve these positive results.

Wildlife

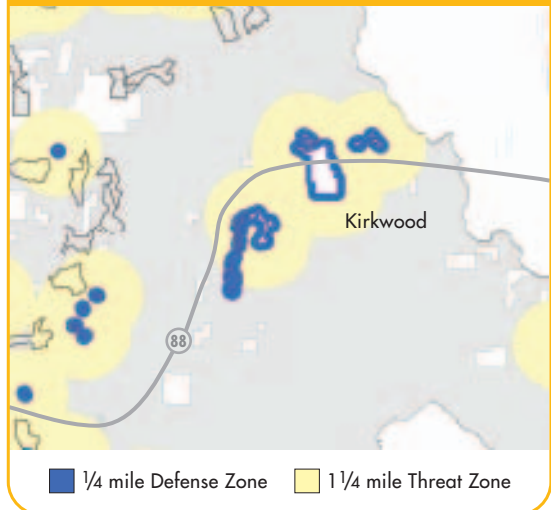
Spotted Owl nesting habitat is projected to double over the next 50 years.



Support this campaign.

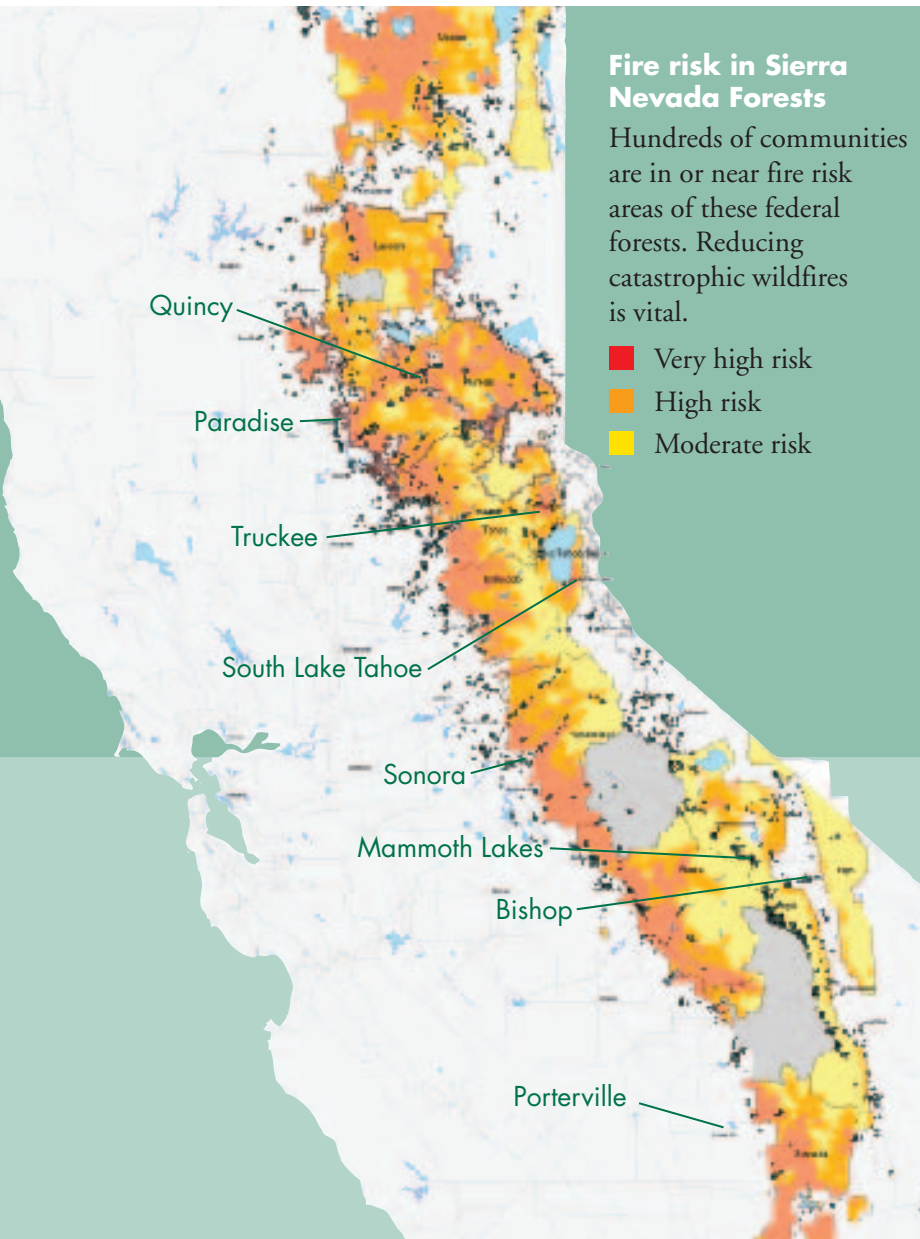
Communities

700 thousand acres around communities will be thinned or cleared, helping to protect nearly 100% of them within 20 years.



Forests With A Future Campaign

The Forest Service calls on you to stay involved or get involved in this campaign to reduce catastrophic wildfires in the Sierra Nevada.



Please help

People living in or near dense forests should create a defense zone around buildings. Clear your yard of brush and low branches. Thin and trim your trees. Roof your home with fire resistant materials. Ensure reserves of water. Follow advice at www.firesafecouncil.org.

Get involved with your local Fire Safe Council (or form your own). Work with civic leaders and local organizations to help identify resources necessary to thin trees and remove underbrush. Monitor, advise and pitch-in where needed.

Consult with Forest Service experts to ensure your actions will effectively protect old growth forests and wildlife habitat, as well as your community.

Be active and help District Rangers to plan tree thinning projects in your local forests.

Please learn about the need to take these actions now. Don't confuse the tree thinning and underbrush removal projects of this campaign, with the logging operations of decades ago in the Sierra Nevada. We welcome your continued input which has already contributed so much to planning this effort.

For further information
www.forestsfuture.fs.fed.us
or www.fs.fed.us/r5/snfpa



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