

Dear Dr Dewar,

I believe that this article, published in the Washington Times of February 28th, is relevant to your Inquiry into National Parks.

It seems that the USA also has environmental problems caused by misguided forestry practices. They also stopped the fire burning practises of their indigenous people. They also stopped any fuel reduction measures.

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> Below is an article from the US on the problems they are experiencing
> with
> the same lobby that influences Governments around Australia.. How
> Parliamentarians can listen to them is beyond me. Eighty thousand years of
> indigenous management ignored, for what? Let the noxious pest plants grow
> with gay abandon? Never mind. In the Alpine National Park there are
> seventeen different types of pest plant growing in seclusion, untroubled
> by the hand of man or woman.

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> John Cribbes. Phoenix 4WD Club >>

>> The article can be accessed :

>> <http://www.washtimes.com/commentary/20060227-093414-4600r.htm>

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>> Forest restoration realities - Washington Times

>> By Thomas M. Bonnicksen

>> February 28, 2006

>> When a bipartisan group of nearly 100 congressmen proposed

>> accelerated

>> restoration of forests after catastrophic wildfire, the idea drew

>> widespread support from those interested in giving future generations

>> forests to enjoy.

>> The proposal would do two important things: quicken removal of dead trees

>> that otherwise would provide fuel for future wildfires and accelerate the

>> planting of new trees to restore forests that burned.

>> Those supporting the proposal include Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth,

>> Jim Brown, who served as the top forestry official to four Oregon

>> governors, the Society of American Foresters, the National Association of

>> State Foresters, and the International Association of Fish and Wildlife

>> Agencies.

>> With 32 million acres of national forest burned between 2000 and 2004,

>> the need for restoration is clear.

>> However, what is happening -- or not happening -- in federal forests in

>> California provides a glimpse of the challenge of forest restoration.

>> There, the Forest Service has only replanted 3.8 percent of forests

>> burned in 2001. Most remaining burned forest is converting to brush that

>> will dominate the landscape for centuries. Unfortunately, excessive

>> regulation, unnecessary appeals, and lawsuits prevent the Forest Service

>> from keeping burned forests from becoming brush fields.
>> As one who has studied our forests for nearly 40 years, I think one of
>> the most important parts of this proposed legislation is to use science
>> to make decisions.
>> Extremists are using hyperbole, unsubstantiated claims, and convenient
>> myths to oppose the legislation. In particular, they cite myths about the
>> Yellowstone fires of 1988 to argue we should not restore burned forests.
>> As Congress considers this new legislation, it is imperative the facts
>> are known and extremists don't rewrite history. In 1988, U.S. Senate and
>> U.S. House of Representatives committees sent me to Yellowstone to
>> investigate the fires.
>> Wildfires burned 1.3 million acres of forest within and around
>> Yellowstone National Park. These fires blackened 41 percent of the park.
>> Now, because lodgepole pine is growing back over much of the burned area,
>> many people claim the fires were natural and all burned forests will
>> recover in the same way. They proclaim this as the "rebirth" of
>> Yellowstone, as if it is a miracle, even though it is common knowledge
>> lodgepole pine regenerates after fire more quickly than most trees.
>> The wildfires that swept through Yellowstone and surrounding forests in
>> the summer of 1988 were not natural. Those fires were due to nearly a
>> century of fire suppression that created a ready-to-burn forest that
>> nature would have never allowed.
>> Scientific study shows that in 1735, only 30.4 percent of the forest
>> consisted of scattered patches of decadent old growth ready to burn. By
>> 1886, Native Americans had been removed from the park, so the fires they
>> set for centuries stopped. Then the Park Service put out all lightning
>> fires, which allowed flammable old growth to increase. By 1985, it
>> covered 64.9 percent of the park as one continuous blanket of fuel.
>> The Park Service knew this, but it adopted a "let burn" policy in 1972
>> anyway, even during a drought with winds of 70 miles per hour. That led
>> to the huge fires of 1988. No fire anytime else ever burned such a large
>> area of Yellowstone.
>> Thus, the Yellowstone wildfires were caused by a combination of decades
>> of neglect and incredibly poor judgment. It was not a natural event; the
>> forest coming back is not natural either.
>> Now, we see a forest dominated by young lodgepole pines intermixed with
>> dead trees. They will grow older and thicker as a unit, becoming a vast
>> unbroken, highly flammable mass. This will create a new cycle of massive
>> and unnatural wildfires.
>> It is vitally important policymakers understand our response to
>> unnatural, catastrophic fires cannot be to "let nature take its course."
>> We caused today's monster wildfires, not nature.
>> Blackened forests and brush fields across the West remind us of our loss
>> from recent wildfires. This may be our last chance to prevent the next
>> firestorm and restore our forest heritage.
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>> Thomas M. Bonnicksen is a historian of North American forests and the
>> originator of the concept of "restoration forestry." He is professor
>> emeritus of forest science at Texas A&M University, visiting professor at
>> the University of California-Davis, visiting scholar at the Forest
>> Foundation and the author of "America's Ancient Forests" (John Wiley,
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