

For the Love of Burning

A landscape photograph showing a fire burning in the distance, with smoke rising and trees in the foreground. The sky is hazy and orange-tinted.

Willamette Valley Fire Collaboration
Ka-Voka Jackson



H. J. WARRE DEL.

VALLEY OF THE WILLAMETTE RIVER

<https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-record/s/lithograph-valley-of-the-willamette-river/>

Settler botanist David Douglas observed while traveling south of present-day Salem on September 30, 1826:

"Most parts of the country burned; only on little patches in the valleys and on the flats near the low hills that verdure is to be seen. Some of the natives tell me it is done for the purpose of urging the deer to frequent certain parts, to feed, which they leave unburned and of course they are easily killed. Others say that it is done in order that they might better find wild honey and grasshoppers, which both serve as articles of winter food."



PC: Wagon Burners Crew



PC: K. MacKendrick, Wagon Burners



PC: Wagon Burners

Colonial Fear of Fire



This shameful waste
WEAKENS AMERICA!



Remember—Only you can
PREVENT THE MADNESS!

<https://www.scfc.gov/protection/fire-burning/fire-resources/fire-prevention-posters/>



**OUR CARELESSNESS
Their Secret Weapon**

PREVENT FOREST FIRES

U. S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE

STATE
FOREST SERVICE

GREEN FORESTS
give us strength!



STRENGTH for
National Defense



STRENGTH on
the Home Front



STRENGTH in
Water and Power



STRENGTH of
Mind and Body



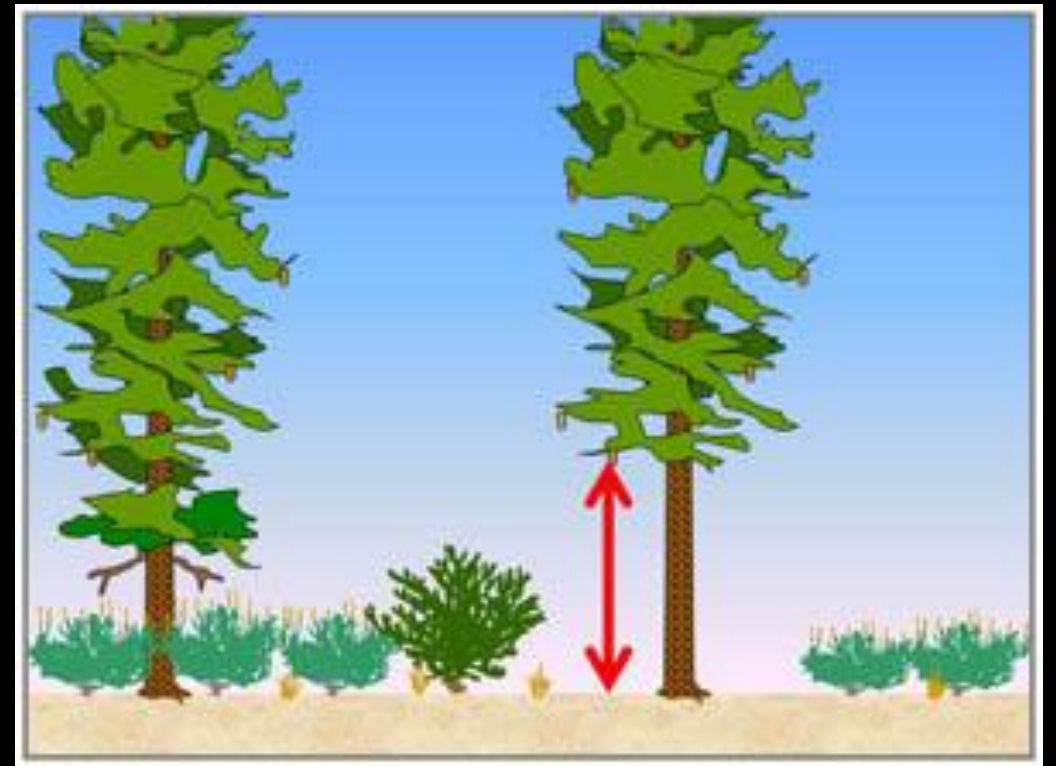
Remember—Only you can
PREVENT FOREST FIRES!

U. S. Department of Agriculture

Anti-fire rhetoric has led to a severe build up in fuels (e.g., dense forest stands and ladder fuels)

The lack of good fire on the landscape is a major cause of the catastrophic wildfires that we've seen in recent years

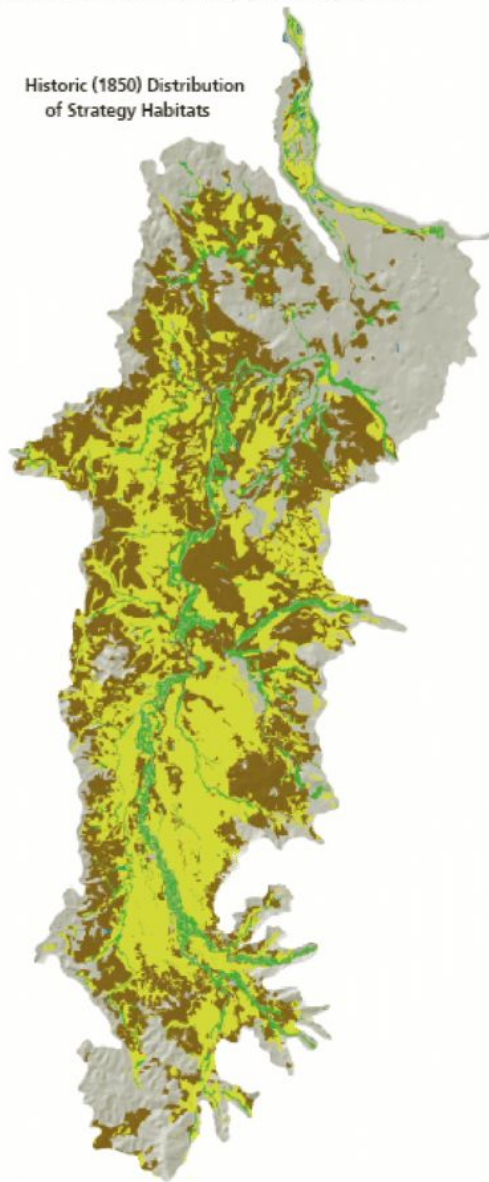
A lack of fire forces our fire adapted native species to compete with invasives that thrive on the poor management practices



<https://surviving-wildfire.extension.org/ladder-fuels/>

Change in Willamette Valley Strategy Habitats

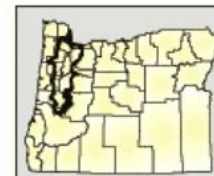
Historic (1850) Distribution of Strategy Habitats



Current (2004) Distribution of Strategy Habitats



-  Grasslands
-  Oak woodlands
-  Riparian
-  Wetlands and wet prairies



Data Source: Oregon Natural Heritage Information Center, 2004

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-change-in-Willamette-Valley-strategy-habitats-since-1850-Source-Oregon_fig1_35646107

Re-emergence of prescribed fire

- **More land conservation efforts use prescribed fire to conserve and protect ecosystems**
- **While Indigenous peoples all over the world own, occupy, or use only a quarter of the land on earth, they safeguard 80 percent of the remaining biodiversity**
- **Like the land, like the native plants, Indigenous people are resilient**

It is important to recognize prescribed fire and land stewardship as a healing ceremony that can be used to heal these broken relationships that have existed thousands of years pre-contact



When Indigenous people are able to build connection to our land, the ecosystem thrives

Having gatherings, sharing knowledge, holding ceremony; this is what relational restoration looks like, and native people have been doing it for thousands of years

Native people carry thousands of years of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, which can often be disregarded or become co-opted by western science without Native leadership



2021 Partner Conversations on Rx Fire Capacity

Nearly 30 convos to understand current gaps in and barriers to building prescribed fire capacity in the WV



Noble Oaks burn 2017 - photo KMacKendrick

Rx Fire Capacity Gaps/Barriers and Corresponding Solutions

Gaps/Barriers Disproportionately Impacting Non-federal Partners:

- Lack of reliable, consistently available, dedicated Rx fire capacity
- Liability and insurance requirements
- Training
- Collaboration
- Funding

Strongest Potential Corresponding Solutions:

- Creation of Rx fire coordinator position(s) and dedicated ecocultural burn crew
- Positions hosted by a fire-insured partner, covers volunteers too
- Coordinator(s) and crew = hub for training for non-Federal partners
- Coordinator(s) develop agreements to enable collaboration
- Facilitate regional volunteer program

*Federal, State, Private, Local Govt, Tribal Govt.s - EVERYONE CONTRIBUTES

As Solutions Emerged:

- Strong theme: partners raising and affirming the imperative to center Tribal needs, voices, priorities and sovereignty as a new Rx fire capacity paradigm in the Valley develops
- All emerging solutions are fundamentally collaborative and are shaped by consistent ongoing dialogue with regional Tribal governments and communities





Solutions: Regional Training and Volunteer Program

ARWP Indigenous Fire Practitioners training 2021 - photo KMacKendrick

Solutions: Dedicated Ecological Fire/Restoration Crew

- Crew available for prescribed burning, pre- and post-burn restoration activities (prep, seeding, monitoring etc), hazard fuel reduction, training support – Integrative model to provide year round work and well rounded skillsets
- Could travel within the region during alternating burn windows to add capacity and gain experience in S. Oregon, N. California, S. Salish Sound
- Need for Indigenous Fire Practitioners and leaders





**Willamette Valley Fire
Collaboration's goal of
working with Tribes to
increase fire capacity and
community land stewardship
provides opportunities for
Tribal members to connect
with fire with community
support, while helping the
land and supporting
traditional lifeways**







Training at Joint Base Lewis McChord



PC: Wagon Burners Crew



PC: Wagon Burners Crew



PC: R. Wiseman





Coyote Creek South, ODFW land near Fern Ridge

Coyote Creek South,
photo credit: City of
Eugene



Coyote Creek South,
photo credit: City of
Eugene





Coyote Oaks - private land burn near Eugene
2022 (wet prairie remnant)



PC: WVFC

In our 2022 season...

WVFC-led burns:

150 acres (9 units on 4 sites)

Partner-led burns we assisted on:

190 acres

Ecostudies Olympia-led burns we assisted on:

335 acres

675 acres burned total!



PC: WVFC

Since July 2022...

- Crew has treated nearly 200 acres of hazardous fuels in/around Eugene, Oakridge, Grand Ronde, and communities along the McKenzie River (upcoming)
- Attended and supported 2 Tribal fire practitioner trainings in Siletz and Grand Ronde, opening pathways for nearly 20 Tribal members and staff to participate in upcoming burns on Tribal priority sites
- Prepared for and presented to community groups, classrooms, and peers
- Participated in field trips to learn about intersections of culture and ecology and elevate Tribal history
- Attended trainings ranging from leadership development (S131), Transponder 6-part gender 201 series, communication and conflict mediation, chainsaw use, ATV use, Central Oregon and Central Coast TREC
- We have a lease in place with TNC for office space in exchange for work to maintain areas of Willow Creek and prep for upcoming burns
- 6 sites in SWV and 5 in mid WV (2023)



Katie MacKendrick

kmackendrick@ecoinst.org

Ka-Voka Jackson

kjackson@ecoinst.org

Gary Slater

gslater@ecoinst.org

Ecostudies Institute

<https://ecoinst.org>



PC: WVFC