

Wilderness Fire Management: Was it Harder Then or Now?

Wilderness Fire Workshop
Choteau, MT – July 9, 2019

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RMRS Fire, Fuels & Smoke Program

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Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute

Wilderness Fire

Natural & Wild

A Place for Students of Fire
& Fire Ecology

An Ecological Imperative

A Fuels Mosaic

Resilient Ecosystems

Fire Adapted Plants & Animals

Short-term vs. Long-term Risk to
Nearby Communities

Future Generations

Wilderness Fire in the Northern Rockies:

Large wildernesses with room to learn about fire

Glacier National Park



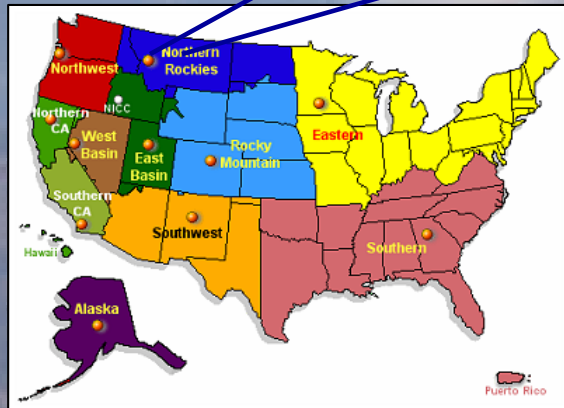
Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex



Selway-Bitterroot & Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness Areas



Yellowstone National Park



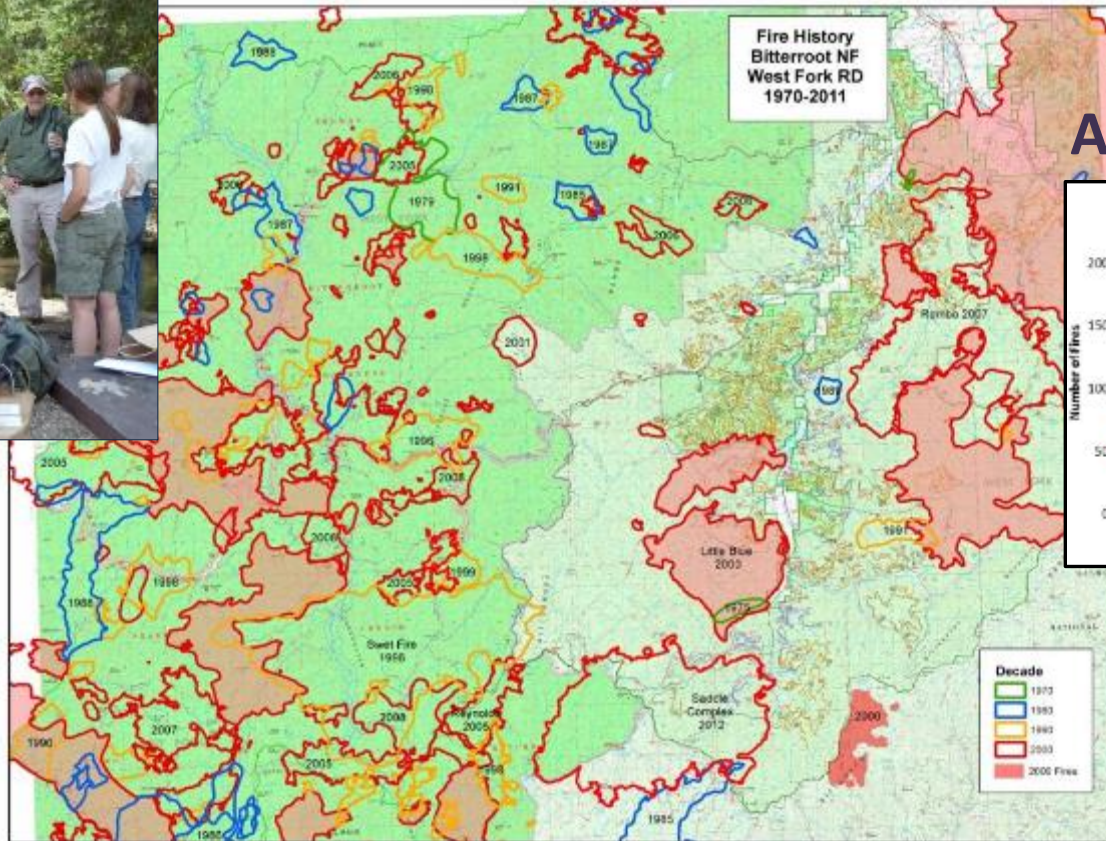
2014 Field Trip: 40 Years of Wilderness Fire

IN THE SELWAY-BITTERROOT & FRANK CHURCH-RIVER OF NO RETURN

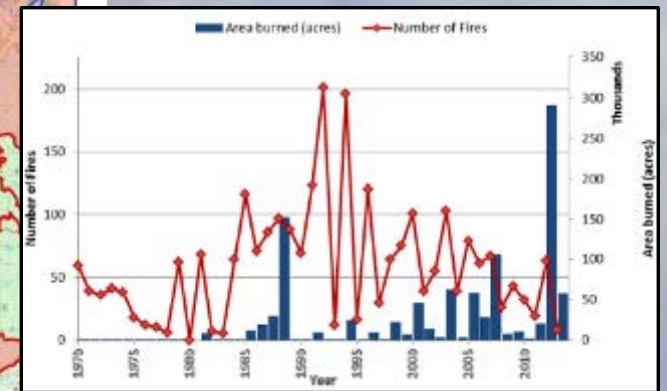
A LUNCHTIME CONVERSATION



FIRE HISTORY 1970-2011



ACRES BURNED 1970-2014



Some of the **Retired** Wilderness Fire Champions in the Northern Rockies

TOM ZIMMERMAN



BUD MOORE



BOB MUTCH



ORVILLE DANIELS



DAVE BUNNELL



NORM KAMRUD



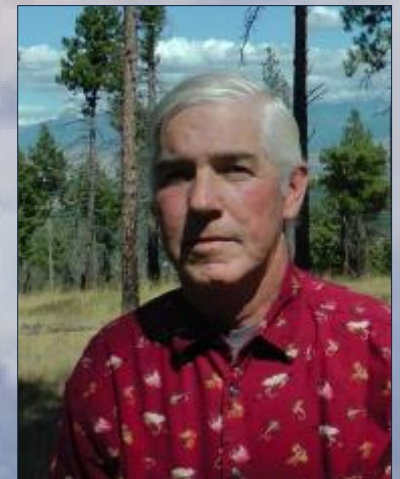
BRAD MCBRATNEY



STU HOYT



DAVE CAMPBELL



GEORGE WELDON

Interviews: Capturing Insights on Successes & Challenges of Wilderness Fire Management

(July 2014 – February 2016)



Dave Bunnell

Dave Campbell

Orville Daniels

Stu Hoyt

Deb Mucklow

Mike Munoz

Norm Kamrud

Tim Sexton

Mary Taber

Fred VanHorne

George Weldon

Dick Bahr

Ed Brunson

Tony Harwood

Diane Hutton

Brad McBratney

Mark Finney

Laurie Kurth

Carol Miller

Penny Morgan

Carl Seielstad

Tom Zimmerman

Learning from a Legacy of Wilderness Fire In the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex

Field Trip & Workshop, Spotted Bear, July 2016

Early Champions

- Dave Bunnell
- George Weldon

Current Managers

- Deb Mucklow
- Mike Munoz

Scientists

- Carol Miller
- Phil Higuera
- Andrew Larson
- Sean Parks

9 Videos

<http://nrfirescience.org/event/wilderness-fire-workshop-and-field-trips>



Discussing Past, Present & Future Challenges

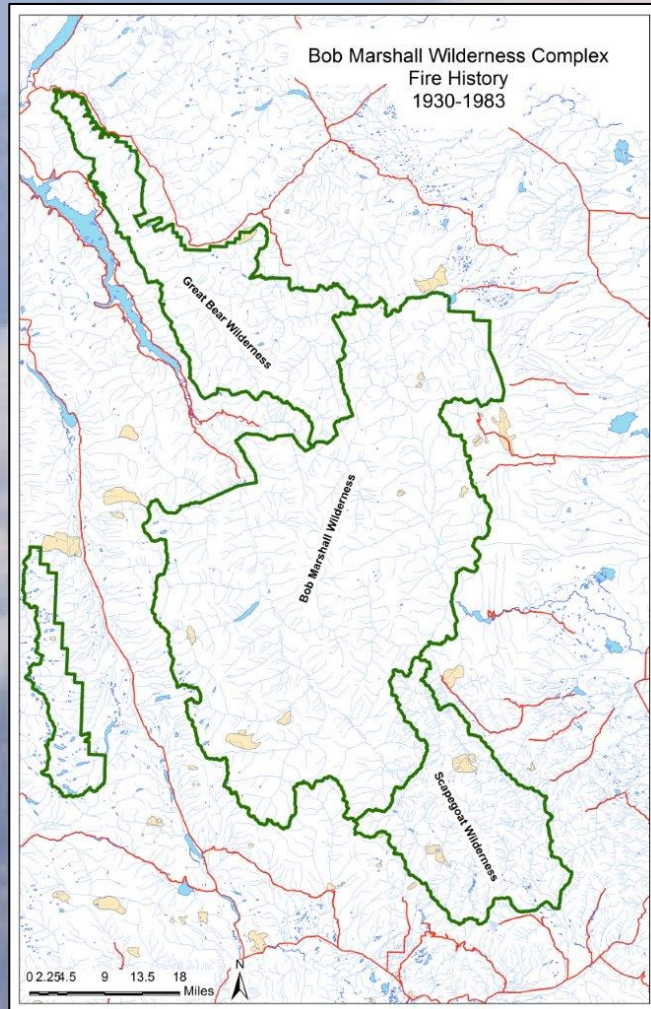


NORTHERN ROCKIES
FIRE SCIENCE
NETWORK

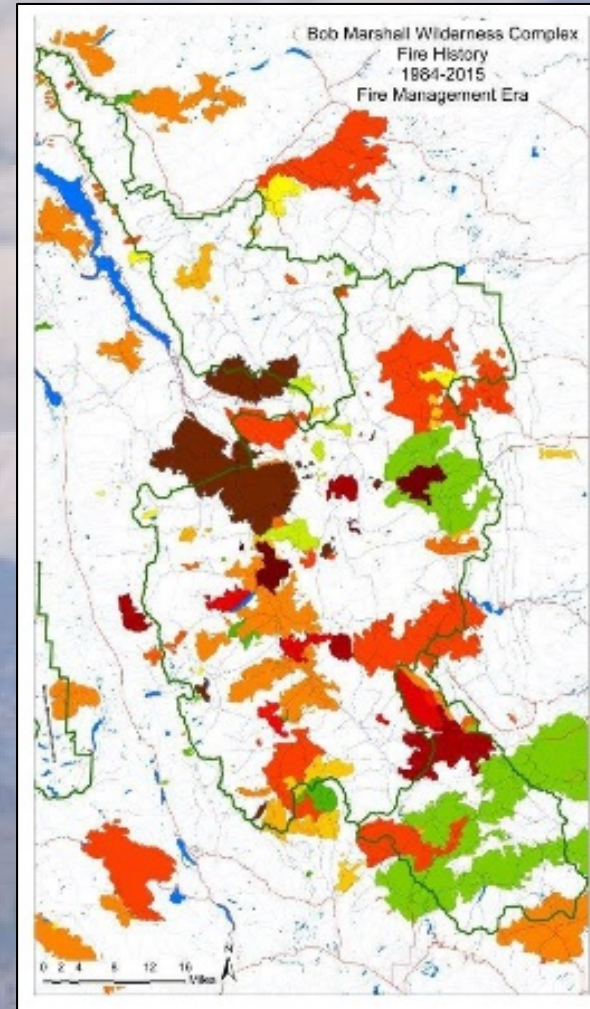
Celebrating the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex

How Did We Get From A to B?

A: FIRE HISTORY 1930-1983

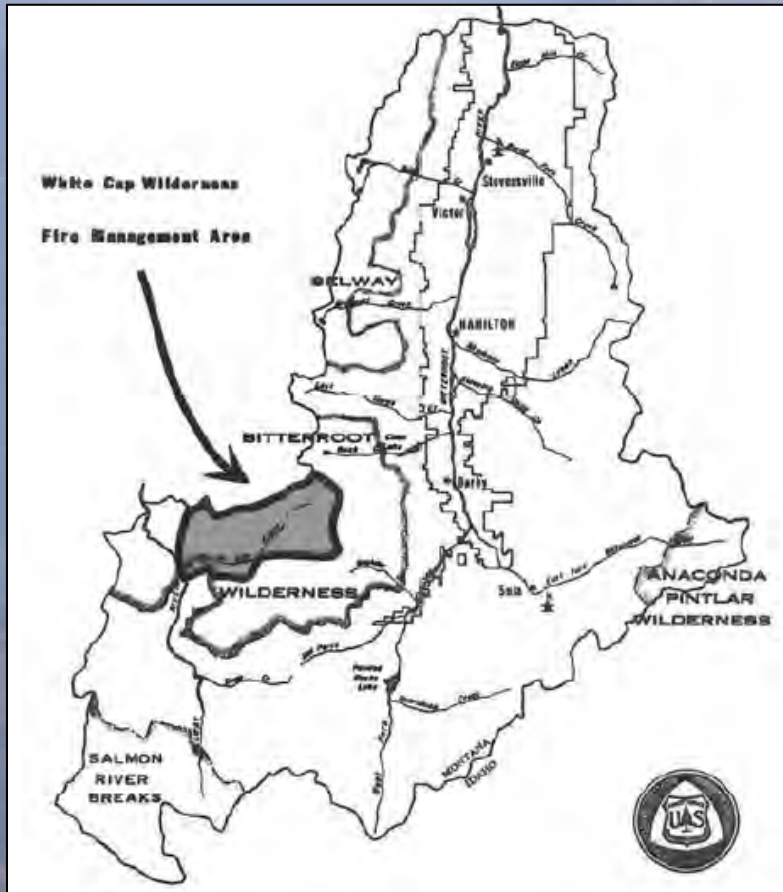


B: FIRE HISTORY 1984-2015



Wilderness Fire Management: Early Efforts

White Cap Study
1970 (SBW)



Bad Luck Fire
1972 (SBW)



Charlotte Peak Fire
1985 (BMWC)



Was it Easier in the '70s and '80s? It Was Cooler...

REPEAT PHOTOS



-- Fire History Project
Salish and Kootenai Tribes

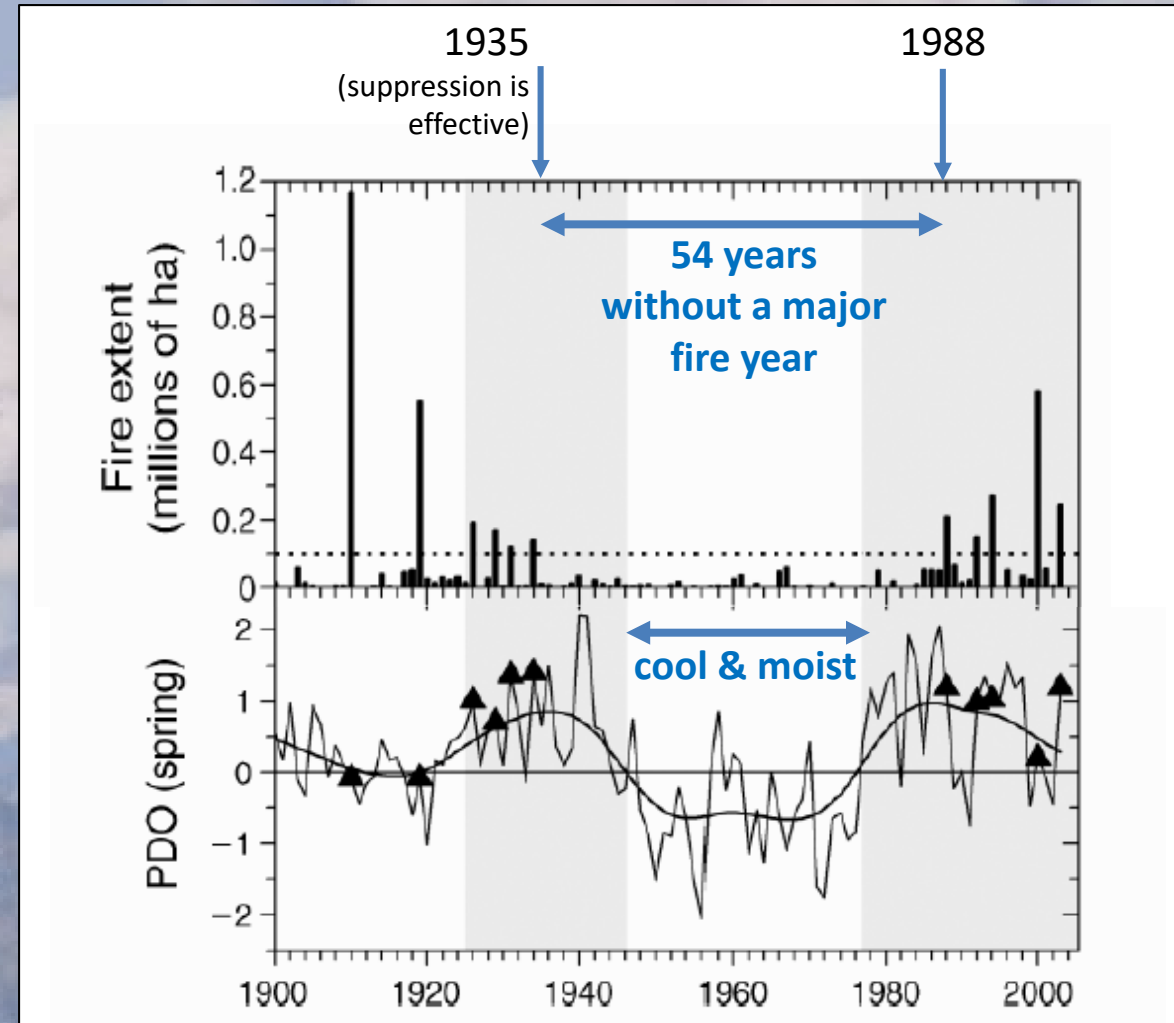


Figure modified from Morgan et al. 2008 *Ecology*

Was it Easier in the '70s and '80s?

“This was such an outlandish proposal – to allow natural process of fire to burn in wilderness – that it just absolutely exceeded the culture within our agency to accept that.”

– Dave Bunnell



Importance of Early Champions



**WHITECAP FIVE: BOB MUTCH, BILL WOLF,
BUD MOORE, ORVILLE DANIELS, DAVE
ALDRICH**

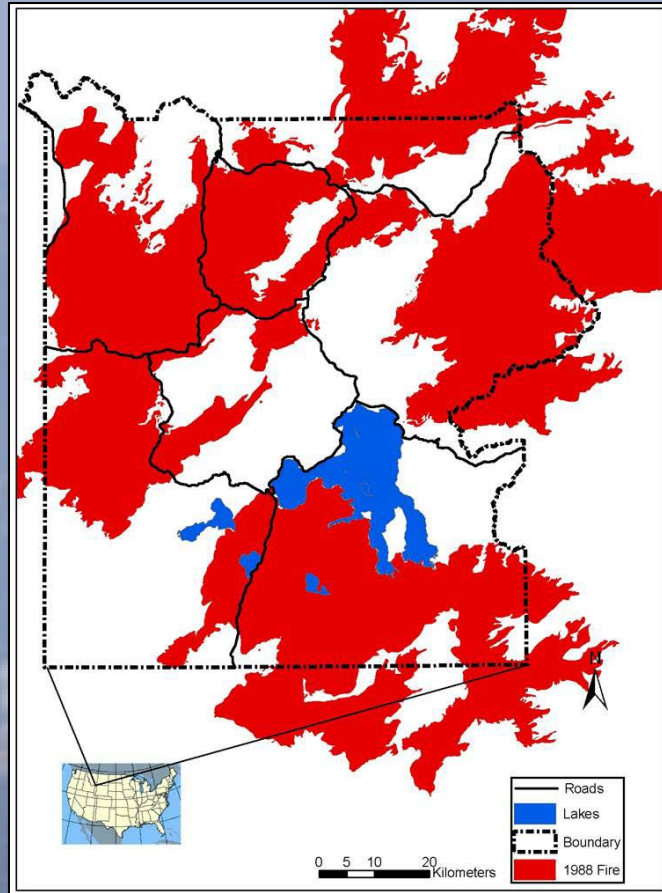


AGENDALESS MEETINGS

Prescribed Natural Fire!

Yellowstone National Park: 1988

1988 FIRES



BIG FIRE, PUBLIC COMMUNICATION, ECOLOGICAL RECOVERY

Howling Prescribed Natural Fire

Glacier National Park - 1994



- PNF during National PL5
- 1994 Storm King fatalities
- New Park Superintendent
- Tools: FARSITE, RERAP
- Resources: Dedicated NPS Management Team (75 days)

Led to Dedicated Fire Use Teams and Fire Use Modules

2000 – 2009



- Cerro Grande
- Bitterroot Fires
- National Fire Plan
- McDonald II Fire
- 2001, 2003 Policy Updates
- USFS Fire Use Program

Increasing capacity, risk analysis tools, Land Management Plans



2009 - Present

- One Type of Fire – 2009 Policy Implementation Guidance – Management for Multiple Objectives, Strategies, Tactics
- Warmer Climate
- Mosaic & Reburns
- More Wildland Urban Interface
- Managing natural fire outside wilderness?

Was It Harder Then Or Now?



A photograph of a volcanic eruption. A large, billowing plume of white smoke or ash rises from a mountain range, filling much of the sky. The mountains in the foreground are covered in dense evergreen forests. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

Was It Harder Then Or Now?

YES!

Conclusion – 2016 Workshop Discussions

Now

- Warmer climate & bigger fire
- Administrative burden

Then

- No precedent
- No policy
- Lack of science & technology
- Lack of skills for long-duration fires

Reflections

- Personal commitment – many passionate champions in the Northern Rockies
- Short window to keep mosaics
- Still working on accepting long-duration fire outside of Wilderness
- What drives objectives (stated and unstated?)

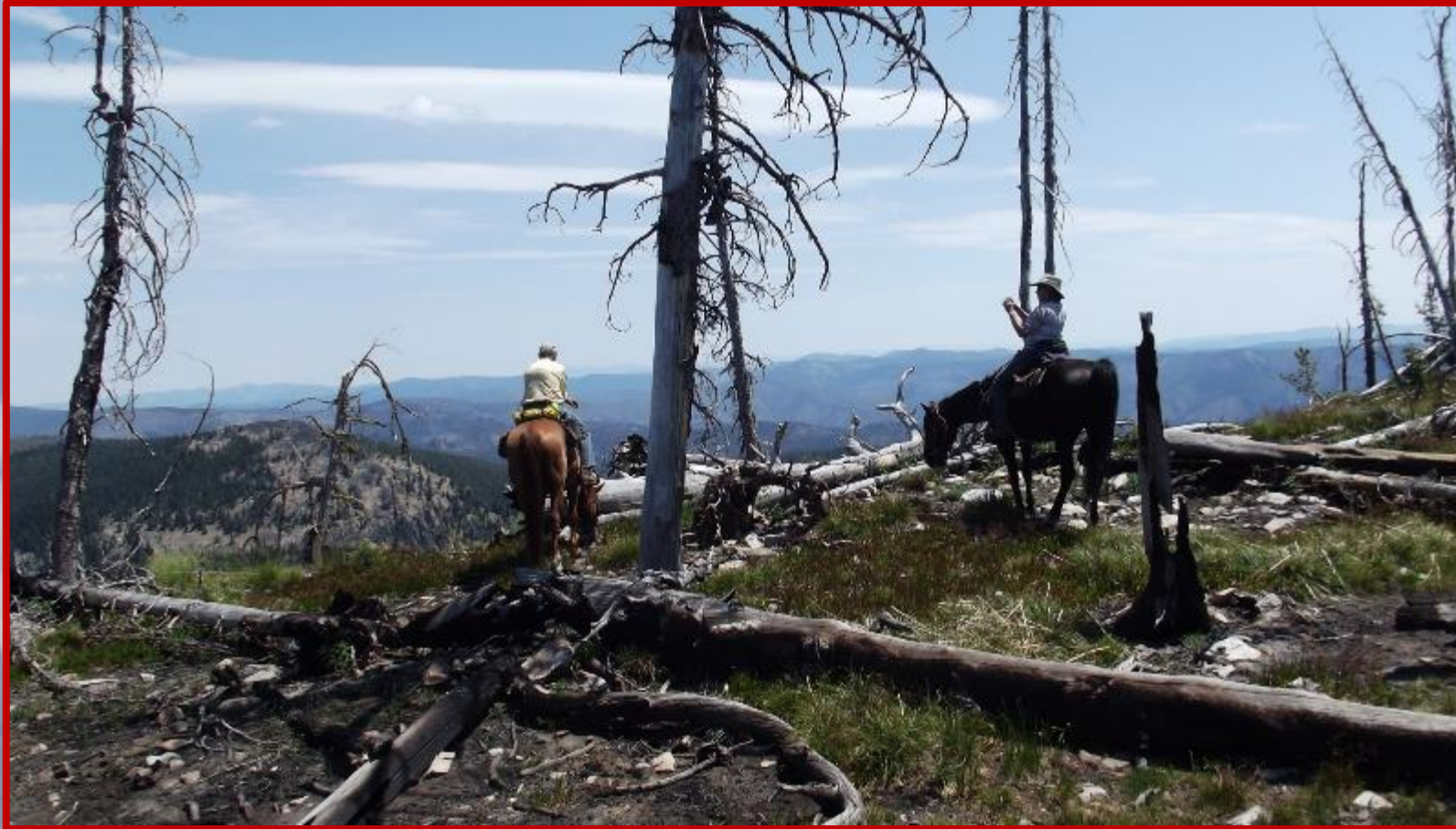
Wilderness Fire – Is it a Religion?



“It’s a belief system and an attitude about nature and the specific role that fire plays in nature... when people pick up the ideology that fire is a natural example that has beneficial effects, then it leads you into all kinds of actions. That’s just like a religion. A religion is an ideology.”

– Orville Daniels

Retired Wilderness Fire Champions in the Northern Rockies



VOICES OF THE PAST GUIDING US TO THE FUTURE

For more information:

Northern Rockies Fire Science Network

[NRfirescience.org](http://nrfirescience.org)

(<http://nrfirescience.org/event/wilderness-fire-workshop-and-field-trips>)

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