



3. Wilderness Fire Management

Societal Impact: Conceptual, Connectivity

Relevant NRFSN Logic Model Outcomes:

Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
NRFSN is a primary resource for fire managers interested in learning about science & for scientists interested in disseminating science	Fire managers access relevant science more easily, increase their knowledge of science, and share scientific products with colleagues	Fire managers integrate scientific information and tools into fire and fuels management
Fire managers have information and tools to communicate relevant fire science to public	Fire managers use information and tools to communicate relevant fire science to public	The science used in fire management decisions and actions is understood by the public
Policy makers access relevant fire science more easily	Policy makers increase their knowledge of fire science and share scientific information with colleagues	Policy makers use scientific information to inform fire management policy

The Northern Rockies has a substantial amount of wilderness, a rich history of wilderness fire science and management, and a number of retired wilderness fire experts. In July 2020, NRFSN completed a new video titled [The Benefits of Hard Decisions: Applying Lessons from Wilderness Fire](#). The video was intended to spark discussion about managing fire for resource benefit on public lands: including reasons behind using this management approach; factors that influence the ability to do so; resources and steps that support fire for resource benefit; considerations to keep in mind; and other wisdom from experts. As intended, the video has been used in both NWCG training and university courses. For example, this resource was shared with participants in the Northern Rockies Training Center’s M-581, Fire Program Management, course. Additionally, two University of Montana professors described it as a valuable virtual learning tool during the pandemic. The *Benefits of Hard Decisions* video has received over 3,400 views and NRFSN has received considerable feedback:

“I am too...facing a semester with an increased need for on-line learning resources for #FireEcology, this and other @NRfirescience videos are great!” - Professor, University of Montana

“This video speaks directly to federal line officers and agency administrators but offers some great insight into why land and fire managers may utilize fire for resource benefit. I encourage you to share with your stakeholders and have the hard-truth conversations earlier than later.” - Coordinator, Western Region, Wildland Fire Cohesive Strategy

“I just shared the video with the NPS fire leadership. You are making a difference!” - National Burned Area Rehabilitation Coordinator, National Park Service

“It's a very effective video...There are many powerful messages in there that many people need to hear.” - Director, interagency Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute

“This is the single best media product I've seen in quite some time. It's clear, concise, touches on MORE topics that I would have imagined a video of this length could, and hits all the professionals needed to be incredibly convincing.” - Program Manager, Rocky Mountain Research Station's Fire, Fuels, and Smoke Program at the Missoula Fire Sciences Lab

“A must see video about managed fire... You might recognize a few friends and come away with a great message.” - Fuels Specialist, Intertribal Timber Council

“The script and editing are so tight. Not a minute wasted...it seems like the WUI has stolen the whole issue of fire and the time could not be better to remind people of wilderness fire and these experts who appear in the film.” - Writer and former National Park Service Ranger

In 2021, the NRFSN completed a second video on wilderness fire. This 30-minute documentary about the evolution of wilderness fire management in the Northern Rockies is narrated by retirees Orville Daniels, Dick Bahr, Laurie Kurth, and by Dr. Mark Finney. It uses the Bad Luck (1972), Canyon Creek (1988) and Howling (1994) fires as case studies. These fires offered lessons about climate change and fire, public communication, and the science of fire that was ultimately relevant to fire management outside of wilderness. This video was only recently completed and we have not received feedback on it at this time; however, we look forward to sharing it widely in the coming months. In particular, we plan to show it at the upcoming virtual AFE conference.

At the request of the interagency Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center, NRFSN helped update the fire toolbox on the wilderness.net [website](#) to include new science resources.

Unfortunately, a wilderness fire field trip and workshop in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness planned for 2021 had to be postponed because of the pandemic. This workshop was going to build on the 2016 and 2019 wilderness fire workshops we hosted, which brought together retired wilderness champions, current managers, and fire ecology students to talk about past successes and future challenges in managing wilderness fire. We hope to conduct these in 2022.

NRFSN also maintains an online [Hot Topic: Wilderness fire](#) that includes curated links to research briefs, syntheses, publications, videos, webinars, and events (past and upcoming) about wilderness fire. This Hot Topic webpage is consistently used, with over 200 page views in FY21.



Mission-Upland Burn, Mission Mountain Wilderness, Flathead National Forest (photo courtesy of Flathead NF)