

FIRE ON THE WILDLAND–URBAN INTERFACE

LANDOWNER BEHAVIORS TO REDUCE WILDFIRE HAZARD IN AREAS OF EXURBAN POPULATION GROWTH

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ABSTRACT

Nonmetropolitan population growth is driving much of the increasing concern about wildfire hazards at the wildland–urban interface (WUI). This is especially true in areas such as the western United States where exurban development typically occurs near public lands. Rural landowners in such areas often have moved from areas where wildfire is not a regular occurrence and thus may be unaware of actions they can take to reduce wildfire hazard on their properties. To design educational strategies and predict citizen responses to hazard-reduction proposals, it is important to understand what citizens of these areas are doing about wildfire and fuels management. Utah has been the nation’s fifth fastest growing state since 1990, and much of that growth is occurring in areas at the wildland–urban interface. In spring 2008 we surveyed residents of rapidly growing exurban areas of Utah, focusing on owners of 2- to 50-acre rangeland properties that may be most susceptible to wildfire hazards. In all four study areas, more than half of the respondents reported having taken some sort of action to reduce wildfire hazards on their properties. The most common practice was to remove flammable vegetation from around the home. Other commonly reported practices were to burn vegetation on their own properties and to use grazing animals to reduce fine fuels. The likelihood of engaging in specific behaviors varied by ecosystem type and property size, but it was not associated with length of tenure, suggesting that failure to protect one’s property is not associated with being a newcomer to a WUI community. However, people who own their property in part to gain economic benefits from the land were more likely to engage in some hazard-reduction activities than respondents who use their properties primarily for recreation use.

Keywords: behaviors, exurban landowners, fuels management, grazing, rural population growth, wildland–urban interface.

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PRESCRIBED FIRE IN NATURAL AREAS: AN EFFECTIVE METHOD OF SUPPRESSING SEVERE WILDFIRES IN THE WILDLAND/URBAN INTERFACE OF EAST-CENTRAL FLORIDA

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ABSTRACT

Prescribed fire applied to natural areas is an effective method of suppressing and ultimately containing severe, fast-moving, and potentially large, destructive wildfires that periodically burn in the populated scrubby flatwoods areas of east-central Florida. A case study of how prescribed fire activity in four different locations in south and central Brevard County suppressed wildfire and enhanced containment efforts will be presented. Controlled burning, applied with frequent return intervals under prescribed conditions, efficiently and safely reduces wildland fuel-accumulated vegetation that would otherwise be readily available during drought and critical fire weather conditions to rapidly spread wildfire.

Keywords: critical fire weather, prescribed fire, severe wildfire, wildfire suppression, wildland/urban interface.

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