

**Department of Natural Resources
Forest Resilience Division**

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Learn more about DNR's Prescribed Fire Program

Burning for Forest Restoration

**Using low-intensity
prescribed fire where
appropriate to restore
forests to a healthy and
resilient state while
reducing the risk of
catastrophic wildfires**



WHAT IS PRESCRIBED FIRE FOR FOREST RESTORATION?



Ecological burns (also known as prescribed fire) reduce wildfire impacts and help to restore our central and eastern Washington forests

by removing overcrowded vegetation. Skilled professionals use low-intensity fire to reduce vegetation on the forest floor, including dense shrubs and saplings, which results in lower wildfire intensity during future fires.

Studies have shown that forests with completed forest health treatments have a higher tree survival rate after a wildfire than those left untreated. These burns are conducted under strict safety regulations and produce a small amount of smoke that pales in comparison to that generated by a high-severity fire.

COVER AND TOP PHOTO BY MIKE NORRIS/DNR

DID YOU KNOW?

DNR launched its prescribed fire program in 2019 following a successful pilot project and support from the state legislature. Along with supporting burns on state lands, the program provides funding and resources to support partners to promote and implement prescribed fire in Washington state.

 Visit our website:
dnr.wa.gov/prescribedfire

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UNHEALTHY, OVERCROWDED FOREST



HEALTHY, THINNED FOREST AFTER PRESCRIBED BURN



Why Do We Need Prescribed Fires?

In the dry and mixed-conifer forests of central and eastern Washington, fire has always been part of a healthy ecosystem. Aggressive suppression policy removed it from the landscape for more than a century, allowing the forests to become unnaturally dense. In these forests, low-intensity fires reduce built-up dead vegetation, cycle nutrients back into the soil, activate seeds and improve wildlife habitat.

Prescribed fire introduces those low-intensity fires back into the forests, helping the landscape become healthier and more resilient in the event of a wildfire. Prescribed fire also creates a better landscape for firefighters to more effectively and efficiently engage wildfires.

“FOREST HEALTH TREATMENTS, INCLUDING MECHANICAL FOREST THINNING AND FOREST RESTORATION BURNING, ARE THE PROACTIVE APPROACH TO OUR STATE’S WILDFIRE CRISIS.”

HILARY S. FRANZ
Commissioner of Public Lands



Thinning and pruning can improve forest health by mitigating insect, disease, and wildfire impacts.

RESTORATION BURNING Part of a Larger Effort

This work, along with mechanical forest thinning, is part of the state’s 20-Year Forest Health Strategic Plan for central and eastern Washington. The plan involves public and private partners from the state, federal, tribal and local levels all working together to reduce the risk of uncharacteristically severe wildfires while bringing our forests back to a more natural state.

Prescribed fire is also part of DNR’s Wildland Fire Protection 10-Year Strategic Plan, a response to our worsening wildfire seasons. Forest health and resiliency is also the focus of DNR’s 2020 update to the Forest Action Plan, the roadmap for improving and protecting the more than 20 million acres of forest across Washington.

TOP PHOTO BY DEREK CHURCHIL

How Are Prescribed Fires Done?

