

Scientists: Choose planned fires or more unchecked wildfires

By Karl Puckett, Tree Source

The harder we struggle against wildfires, the deeper we sink, like we're in quicksand, says Mark Finney, research forester for the U.S Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Research Station.

"It's called the fire paradox," says Finney, a fire behavior expert based at the Missoula Fire Sciences Lab in Montana. "The more you fight against fires, the worse they get when they happen."

In a nutshell, Finney and other forest experts say, periodic fires reduce fine fuels such as pine needles. They stop young conifer trees from growing into big conifers. Meadows form and break up continuous stands of mature forest.

That's how fire worked its magic for thousands of years.

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