



PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF ASHLAND FOREST RESILIENCY PROJECT AND FOREST RESTORATION

A Longitudinal Study of Ashland Residents, 2012-2019

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Introduction

This public opinion research is part of the multiparty monitoring effort to measure public support for the Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship Project (AFR) and forest restoration in southwest Oregon (Metlen & Borgias, 2013). AFR is a management plan adopted by the US Forest Service in 2009 to reduce wildfire risk in the Ashland watershed and protect the complex forest ecosystems that supply the City's drinking water. While AFR was developed with extensive community input and initiated through a partnership in 2010, there was uncertainty about the extent of public support for the plan and for fuel reduction and forest restoration in the region more broadly.

This study was made possible by a grant secured by the AFR partners from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board for Supplemental Monitoring of the Ashland All-lands Restoration Initiative. The longitudinal analysis presents change in public perception between 2012 and 2019. AFR treatments occurring in this time interval included ecological thinning with helicopter removal of by-product logs delivered to regional mills, and extensive use of controlled pile burning and under-burning to maintain desired conditions.

Between 2010 and 2019, AFR partners treated roughly 13,000 acres on USFS, City of Ashland, and private lands in and around the Ashland watershed. Over this period, the partners secured \$10 million in federal and state grants for expanded treatment on public and private lands and to develop a multifaceted community engagement program. This program was designed to build trust and increase public support for forest restoration and fire use. The AFR partners hosted many public tours in the watershed, communicated with local news media about ecological thinning and prescribed fire use, developed an extensive website, and maintained a Facebook and Twitter presence. They developed short videos, briefs and brochures about forest and fire ecology. They utilized an email listserv, a text message system and event tabling to notify community members about controlled burning activity and to share smoke information.

Beyond the project work and community engagement over the last decade, the broader context in which the Ashland residents viewed AFR has changed. Consecutive years with large fires throughout the Pacific Northwest and northern California, including more local fires in the Rogue Basin and around Ashland, amplified public awareness of the escalating costs of wildfire, the human health impacts of persistent smoke inundation, and the implications of forest degradation. The recent attention given by the Oregon Governor's Wildfire Response Council and local media may have helped crystalize a public sense of urgency to reduce wildfire risks through fuel reduction and forest restoration projects.

Research Methodology

This longitudinal survey research was administered by the Southern Oregon University Research Center and utilized Dillman's Tailored Design Method (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). An initial survey was mailed in April 2012 to gather baseline public opinion data prior to the implementation of AFR treatments in winter and spring of 2012-13 (Shibley & Schultz, 2012). A subset of those respondents (AFR Panel) received a follow-up survey online in July 2019, well after AFR was completed. The questionnaires included both open and closed-ended questions exploring beliefs about forests in the Ashland Creek watershed and attitudes towards AFR goals and treatments. By comparing the 2019 results to baseline data from the 2012 survey, we can measure change in the level of public support for fuel-reduction and forest restoration in response to the implementation of treatments in the AFR project area.

The study population was adult residents of Ashland, Oregon and the surrounding area. The sampling frame was registered voters. A simple random sample of 1,800 Ashland residents generated 597 responses in spring 2012, and 289 of those respondents volunteered to be contacted again for follow-up surveys. In summer 2019, 101 people completed the online survey. Our sample is biased toward middle age, middle income and college educated respondents. This bias is accentuated in the AFR Panel.

Only AFR Panel respondents (n=101) are used in this current analysis. This report contains a comprehensive set of tables and charts displaying and comparing results from 2012 and 2019. The charts show 2019 results, typically rank-ordered high to low. The tables display change over time. Given the small sample size, the response categories on many variables were collapsed for cleaner data display and more reliable statistical testing. For example, "Strongly agree" and "Somewhat agree" were recoded into "Agree". Depending on the structure of the variable and how results are displayed, several different statistical tests were employed (i.e., One-sample *t*-tests, Chi Square tests, and McNemar's test for binary matched-pairs data) are used to evaluate change hypotheses. Change between 2012 and 2019 is reported as statistically significant if $p < .05$ (indicated by *).

Many of the survey responses were recoded into dichotomous variables, typically showing the percentage agreement with a survey question or statement. Since the data include paired responses from participants who completed the survey in 2012 and 2019, McNemar's test for correlated proportions is used to assess if differences in the observed proportions are statistically significant. Many beliefs and attitudes did not change over time, but several did change substantially and significantly. A lack of statistical significance means that we cannot be sure our sample results reflect real opinion change in the population even if there is some observable change in our sample data. The following highlights emphasize change that is both substantial and statistically significant.

Public Opinion Change Highlights

Panel respondents remain very concerned about wildfire risk in the Ashland Creek watershed, they strongly support AFR fuel reduction treatments, and they increasingly support forest restoration in southwest Oregon more generally. This support includes the use of thinning and controlled burning as legitimate fuel reduction tools, and respondents trust the AFR partners. There remains strong opposition to simply leaving forests alone to evolve without any more human intervention or restricting restoration efforts to the Wildland Urban Interface or the area immediately surrounding homes.

1. **Panel respondents are visiting forests in the watershed less often.** In 2012, 42% of panel respondents said they visited the watershed 10 or more times in 2012, compared to 31% in 2019 (see Table 1). When they visit, they mostly hike and walk (see Table 2).
2. **Concern about wildfire in the watershed decreased slightly, but not significantly.** In 2012, 85% of panel respondents said the chances of a large-scale, high intensity fire occurring in the watershed was likely, compared to 76% in 2019 (see Table 4).
3. **Basic knowledge about fire ecology has changed some.** In 2012, 55% of panel respondents believed that prior to European settlement, forests were generally more open than they are today. That increased to 69% in 2019. In 2019, panel respondents were less likely than in 2012 to believe that fires are important for maintaining wildlife habitat (81% compared to 68%) (see Table 5).
4. **There is growing support for forest restoration on public land in southwest Oregon.** In 2012, 40% of panel respondents believed that public forests in the region needed large-scale restoration, compared to 62% in 2019. Similarly, there was a large increase in panel respondents agreeing that forest restoration should remove trees, large and small, if science suggests that is what the landscape used to look like (from 17% in 2012 to 37% in 2019; see Table 6).
5. **There is very little support for leaving forests alone or restricting restoration to the Wildland Urban Interface.** Fewer than 1 in 10 panel respondents agree that forests should be allowed to evolve without any more human intervention. Fewer than 2 in 10 agreed that restoration should focus only on the WUI (see Chart 2).
6. **There is growing support for thinning and controlled burning as legitimate fuel reduction and restoration tools.** In 2012, 58% of panel respondents said commercial thinning was a legitimate tool that resource managers should use more often. That increased to 80% in

2019. Similarly, in 2012, 52% said controlled burning was a legitimate tool that resources managers should use more often. That increased to 76% in 2019 (see Table 7).

7. ***More people know more about AFR, and support for project goals remains overwhelming.*** By 2019, 68% of panel respondents had heard about AFR and knew something about project goals, compared to 30% in 2012 (see Table 8). The local newspaper is still the most common source of information about AFR (see Chart 4). Nearly all panel respondents approved of AFR goals in 2012, and that support is unchanged (see Table 9).
8. ***Trust in all AFR partners remains high.*** About 80 to 90 percent of panel respondents have “some” or “full” trust in the US Forest Service, City of Ashland, The Nature Conservancy and Lomakatsi Restoration Project. Ashland Fire and Rescue is the most trusted organization, and trust in Lomakatsi and the Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative grew the most between 2012 and 2019 (see Table 10).
9. ***People are very satisfied with AFR fuel reduction treatments.*** Based on pre and post-treatment photos in 2019, more than 80% of panel respondents say they are satisfied with the work in the watershed, and about 90% support the continued use of controlled burning and pile burning in AFR (see Charts 6 and 7).
10. ***People feel safer because of AFR and support maintaining and expanding AFR treatments to adjacent private lands.*** Based on pre and post-photos and everything they know about AFR in 2019, about 90 percent of panel respondents agree that they feel safer because of AFR fuel reduction treatments and 90 percent support expanding that work to adjacent private lands. Nearly all panel respondents agree that maintaining the forests treated by AFR should be a high priority (see Chart 8).

Results: Comprehensive Set of Tables and Charts

Table 1: About how many times during the last 12 months have you entered the forest in the Ashland Creek watershed, beyond Lithia Park?

<i>Percent saying</i>	2012	2019	Change ¹
None	12	26	+14
1 or 2 times	19	13	-6
3 to 5 times	18	17	-1
6 to 10 times	9	13	+4
10 or more times	42	31	-11
	100%	100%	

¹ Visits to the watershed declined, and the change is statistically significant (one-sample $t=-3.24$, $p=.002$).

Table 2: What respondents do when they visit forests in the watershed, rank ordered by frequency in 2019

<i>Activity¹</i>	Percent
Hike	68
Walk	34
Observe wildlife	18
Bike	12
Run	10
Ski	7
Other (eat, work, recreate)	7

¹ Open-ended responses to Q2 on the survey were coded by activity (see Appendix A). Some respondents reported engaging in more than one activity.

Table 3: In general, how would you rate the overall condition of the forests in the Ashland Creek watershed?

<i>Percent saying</i>	2012	2019	Change ¹
Unhealthy	11	6	-5
Don't Know	14	24	+10
Healthy	75	69	-6
	100%	99%	

¹Many respondents changed their minds. A majority of those saying “unhealthy” in 2012 changed to “healthy” in 2019; a majority of “don’t know” changed to “healthy”; and a third of “healthy” changed to “don’t know” or “unhealthy”. This overall change is statistically significant ($X^2=15.55$, $p=.004$).

Table 4: What are the chances of a large-scale, high severity fire occurring in the Ashland Creek watershed in the next five years?

<i>Percent saying</i>	2012	2019	Change ¹
Unlikely	7	17	+10
Don't Know	7	7	0
Likely	85	76	-9
	100%	100%	

¹Many respondents changed their minds. Some of those saying “likely” in 2012 changed to “unlikely” in 2019, and a majority of “unlikely” and “don’t know” changed to “likely”. But the change is not statistically significant ($X^2=5.85$, $p=.211$).

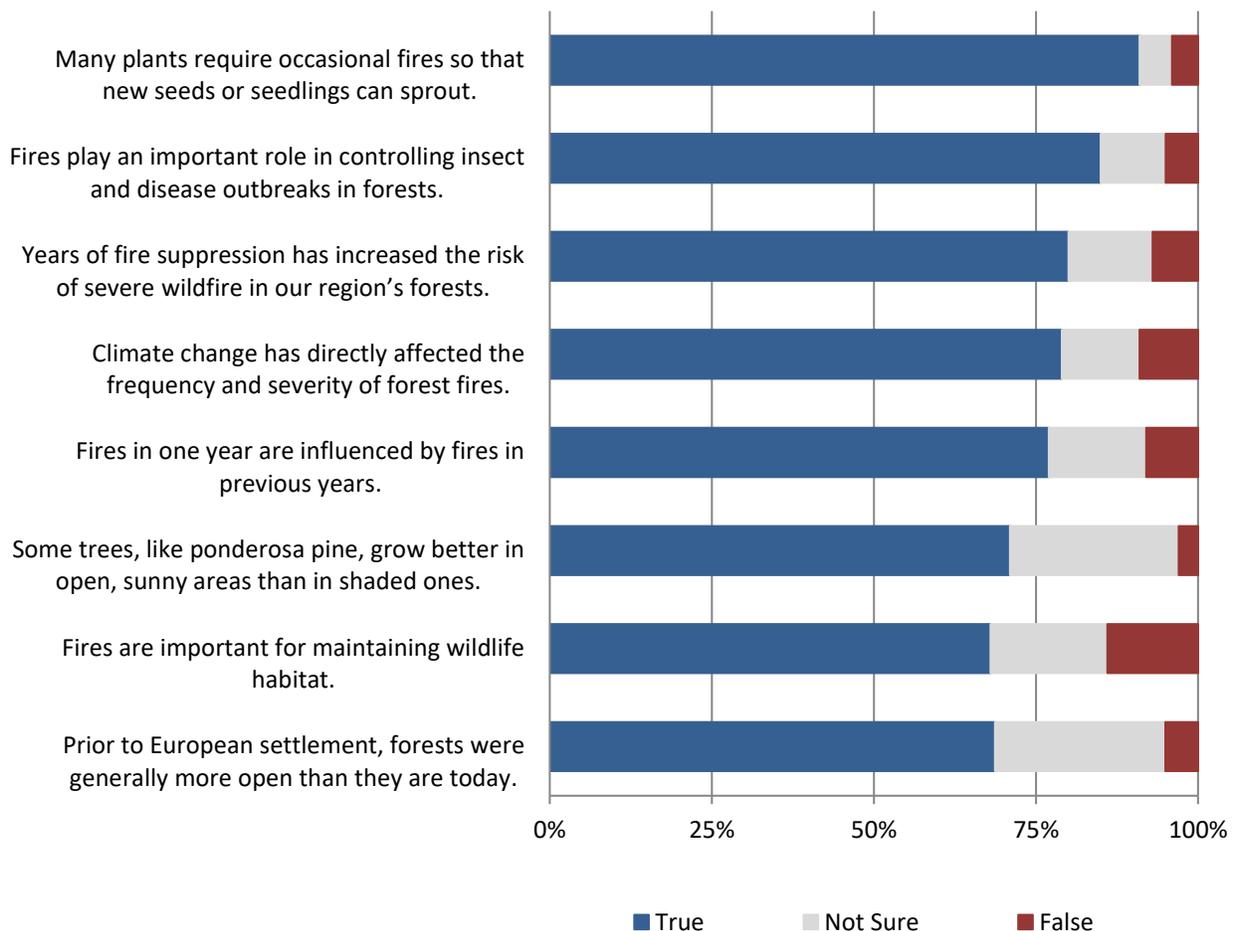
Table 5: Percent of respondents saying these beliefs about wildfire are “true”¹, ranked-order by amount and direction of change

<i>Respond to each statement by indicating whether you believed it is general false, true, or that you are not sure.</i>	2012	2019	Change
Prior to European settlement, forests were generally more open than they are today.	55	69	+14*
Fires in one year are influenced by fires in previous years.	69	77	+8
Some trees, like ponderosa pine, grow better in open, sunny areas than in shaded ones.	69	71	+2
Fires play an important role in controlling insect and disease outbreaks in forests.	90	85	-5
Many plants require occasional fires so that new seeds or seedlings can sprout.	96	91	-5
Years of fire suppression has increased the risk of severe wildfire in our region’s forests.	88	80	-8
Fires are important for maintaining wildlife habitat.	81	68	-13*
Climate change has directly affected the frequency and severity of forest fires.	--	79	--

* Survey responses were recoded into dichotomous variables, showing the percentage agreeing a statement is “true”. McNemar’s test for binary matched-pairs data is used to assess if differences in the observed proportions between 2012 and 2019 are statistically significant ($p < .05$).

¹ Some were posed in the questionnaire as falsehoods and changed here to “true” statements.

Chart 1: Percent of respondents saying these beliefs about wildfire are "true" in 2019¹, rank-ordered by strength of support



¹ Some were posed in the questionnaire as falsehoods and changed here to "true" statements.

Table 6: Percent of respondents agreeing with attitudes toward forest restoration, ranked-order by amount and direction of change

<i>Respond to each statement by indicating whether you agree or disagree.</i>	2012	2019	Change
Public forest lands in southwest Oregon need large-scale restoration.	40	62	+22*
Forest restoration should remove enough trees, large and small, in a particular stand if scientific evidence suggests that is what the landscape used to look like.	17	37	+20*
Restoration efforts should return forests to conditions more like those before European settlement.	45	51	+6
Forest restoration should alter fire behavior by reducing the fuel that has accumulated in the forest as a result of fire suppression and past management.	90	93	+3
We should allow forests to evolve without any more human intervention.	4	6	+2
Forest restoration efforts should be used to help recover native plant and animal species that are rare and endangered in order to maintain biodiversity.	82	83	+1
The main purpose of forest restoration should be to protect humans from fire.	19	20	+1
Restoration should focus only on the Wildland Urban Interface (i.e., the forest edge near town).	13	13	0
The main purpose of forest restoration should be to promote well-functioning ecosystems.	99	91	-8*
Large trees should never be removed in forest restoration efforts.	33	21	-12*

* Survey responses were recoded into dichotomous variables, showing the percentage agreeing with each statement. McNemar's test for binary matched-pairs data is used to assess if differences in the observed proportions between 2012 and 2019 are statistically significant ($p < .05$).

Chart 2: Percent of respondents agreeing with attitudes toward forest restoration in 2019, rank-ordered by strength of support

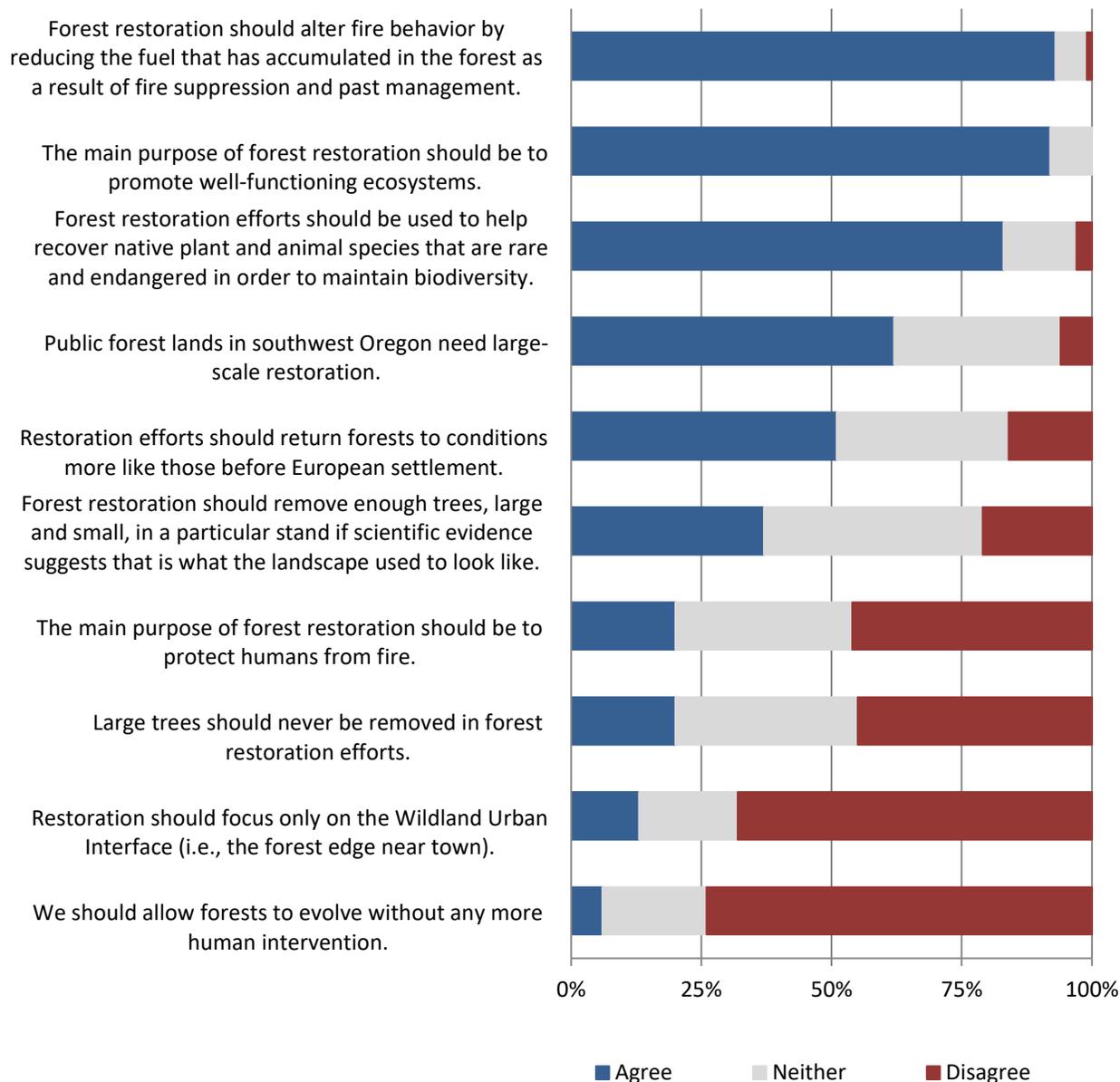


Table 7: Percent of respondents saying that controlled burning, thinning, and mechanical vegetation removal are *legitimate tools* that resources managers should be able to use whenever they see fit.

<i>Tools</i>	2012	2019	Change
Controlled burning	52	76	+24*
Thinning	58	80	+22*
Mechanical vegetation removal	73	64	-9

* Survey responses were recoded into dichotomous variables, showing the percentage agreeing that these tools are legitimate. McNemar’s test for binary matched-pairs data is used to assess if differences in the observed proportions between 2012 and 2019 are statistically significant (p<.05).

Chart 3: Percent of respondents in 2019 saying that thinning, controlled burning, and mechanical vegetation removal are legitimate tools that should be used more often, rank-ordered by strength of support

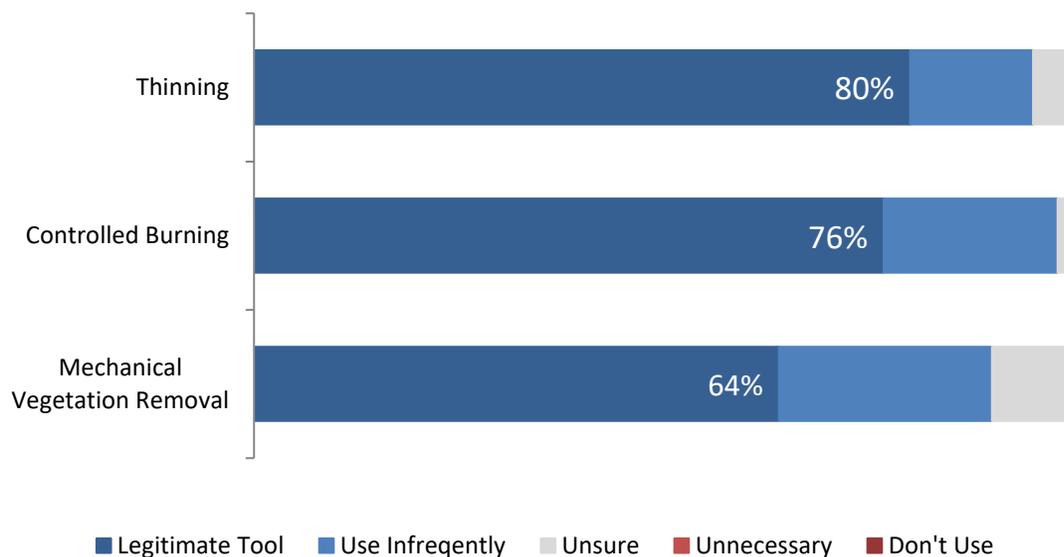
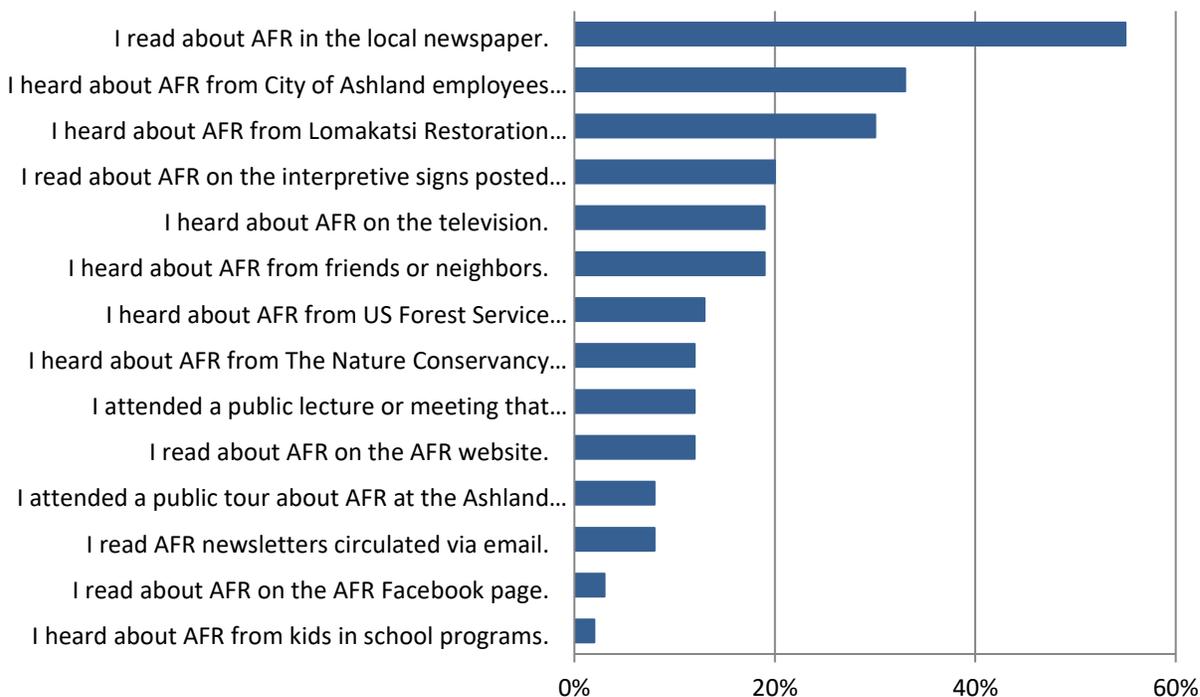


Table 8: Have you heard or read about the Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship Project (AFR)?

<i>Percent saying</i>	2012	2019	Change*
Yes, and I know a little or a lot about the project goals.	30	68	+38
Yes, but I don't know what it involves or no, I've heard nothing about the project.	70	32	-38
	100%	100%	

* Most respondents who didn't know anything AFR in 2012 now report that they know at least a little about project goals. McNemar's test for binary matched-pairs data is used to assess if differences in the observed proportions between 2012 and 2019 are statistically significant ($p < .001$).

Chart 4: Percent of respondents hearing about AFR from various sources¹ in 2019, rank-ordered by popularity



¹Respondents could selected more than one source.

Table 9: Do you approve or disapprove of AFR’s goals?

<i>Percent saying</i>	2012	2019	Change ¹
Approve	99	98	-1
No Opinion	0	2	+2
Disapprove	1	0	-1
	100%	100%	

¹Nearly all respondents approved of AFR’s goals in 2012, and almost no one changed their mind. This change is not statistically significant ($\chi^2=.024, p=.887$).

Table 10: Percent of respondent with some or full trust in these organizations, rank-ordered by level of trust in 2019

	2012	2019	Change
Ashland Fire and Rescue	--	96	
U.S. Forest Service	90	92	+2
City of Ashland	86	91	+5
The Nature Conservancy	82	87	+5
Lomakatsi Restoration Project	58	82	+24*
Klamath-Siskiyou Wildland Center	62	70	+8
Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative ¹	19	64	+45*
Geos Institute	--	43	
Southern Oregon Timber Industry Association	47	41	-6

* Survey responses were recoded into dichotomous variables, showing the percentage with some or full trust with each organization. McNemar's test for binary matched-pairs data is used to assess if differences in the observed proportions between 2012 and 2019 are statistically significant ($p < .05$).

¹ Called the Southern Oregon Small Diameter Collaborative in 2012.

Chart 5: Respondents' 2019 trust in organizations to make good decisions about fuel reduction and forest restoration in the Ashland Creek watershed, rank-ordered by level of full trust

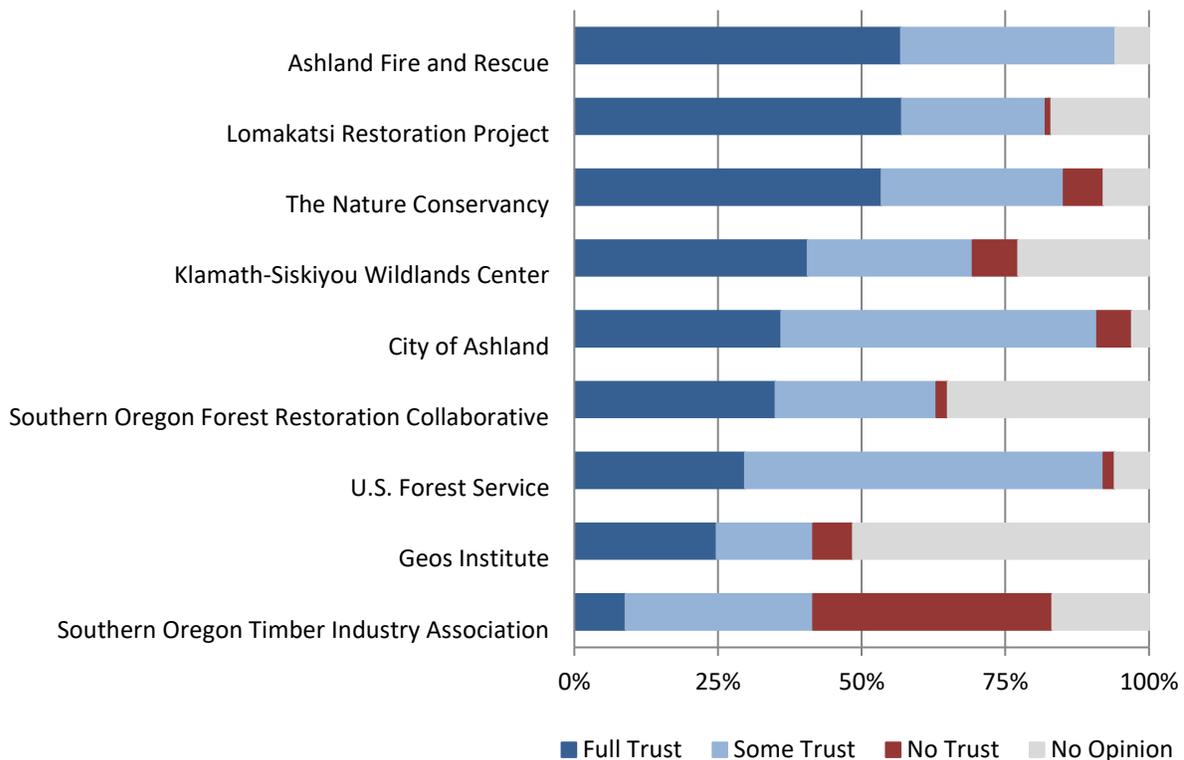


Table 11: The following photo-pairs show forests in the Ashland watershed before and after of AFR fuel reduction treatments. The left image shows pre-treatment conditions, and the right image shows the same site post-treatment. Please indicate whether you are satisfied or dissatisfied with these fuel reduction efforts.

Photo-Pair #1



Photo-Pair #2



Photo-Pair #3



Chart 6: Percent of respondents in 2019 who are satisfied with AFR treatments

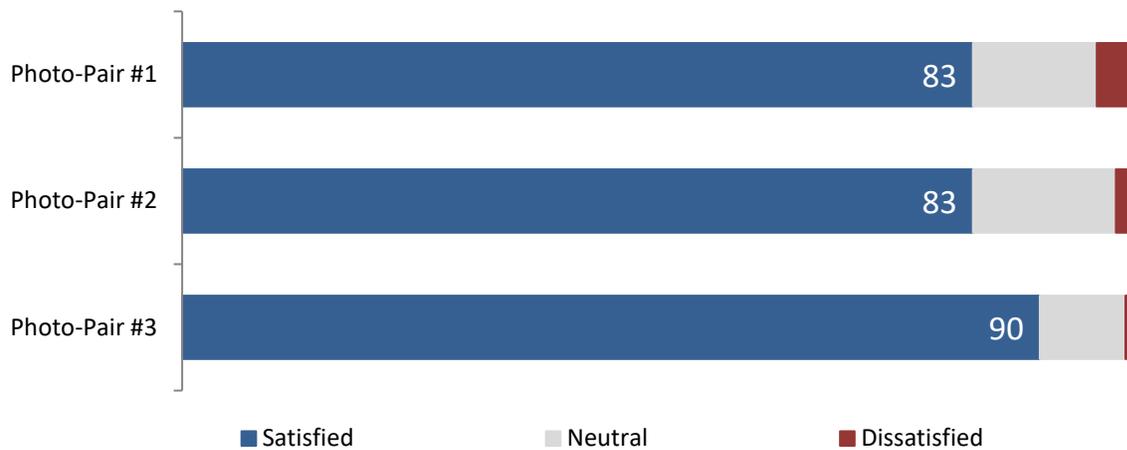
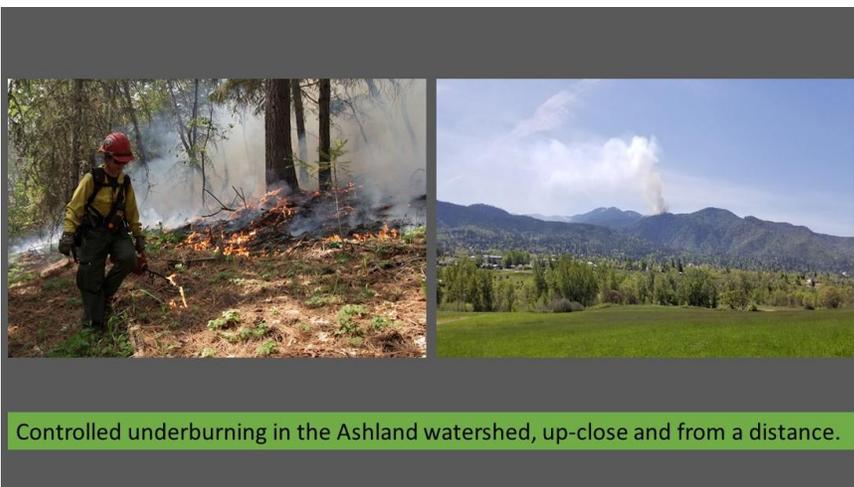


Table 12: Please tell us whether you support or oppose the continued use of controlled underburning and pile burning as illustrated by these photos from the Ashland Forest Resiliency Stewardship Project.

Controlled Underburning



Pile Burning



Chart 7: Percent of respondents in 2019 who support the use of fire in AFR

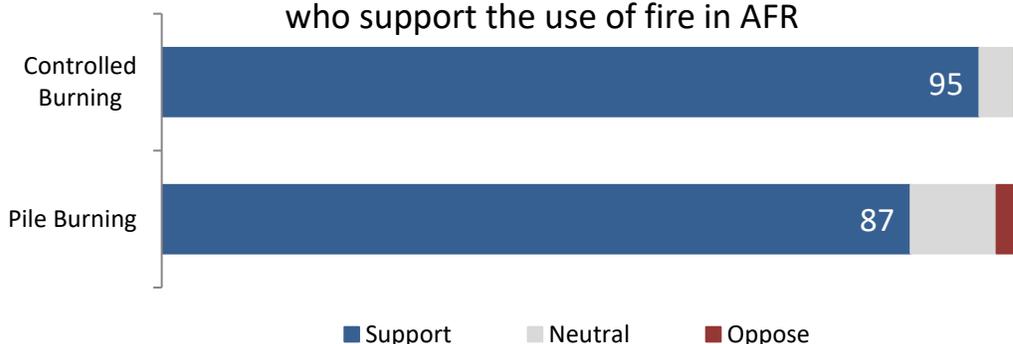


Chart 8: Based on the pre and post-treatment photos and everything they know about AFR, percent of respondents in 2019 who agree that...

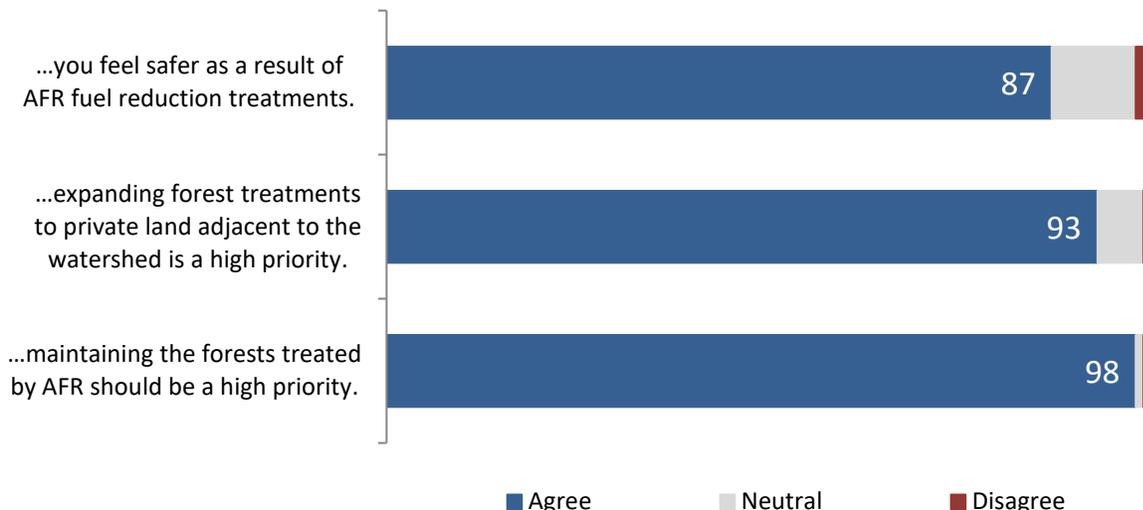


Table 13: Percent of final comments in 2019 that were overall supportive or expressed concern

	Percent ¹
Supportive	70
Ecosystem benefit	34
Human safety	24
No specific reason	12
Concerned	28
Health risks related to smoke	12
Cost concerns	7
Adverse ecosystem effects	7
No specific reason	2

¹ There were 41 final comments in response to Q25 (see Appendix A). Each response was coded as either supportive or concerned and common rationales were identified. The total does not equal 100 percent due to rounding error.

Summary

Prior to implementing AFR ecological thinning with commercial byproduct logs in 2012, a survey of Ashland, OR residents measured people's forest values, their knowledge about fire and forest ecosystems, and their support for fuel-reduction and forest restoration in the region. The survey found that people cared deeply about regional forests, were very concerned about the risk of wildfire in their watershed, and strongly supported active management to reduce fuels and enhance forest resilience.

Ashland residents value forests in the region for their beauty, accessibility, biological diversity and ecological functions. In fact, the natural environment surrounding town was more important to residents than other community amenities; they frequently visited forests in the local watershed; and they were very concerned about the risk of wildfire. While most residents were unaware of AFR, there was strong support for AFR's fuel reduction goals, including the use of commercial thinning and prescribed fire to achieve those goals. Furthermore, there was substantial trust in the organizations that comprise the AFR Partnership (City of Ashland, US Forest Service, Lomakatsi Restoration Project, and The Nature Conservancy), and residents supported collaborative, community-based efforts to monitor AFR's implementation and effectiveness. While there was little support for allowing National Forests in the region to evolve without any more human intervention, Ashland residents were uncertain that those forests needed large scale restoration. Where restoration was needed, residents believed the goals should be more ecological (functional integrity) than historical (returning to pre-settlement conditions).

Following the final phase of AFR thinning and increased use of prescribed fire, an online survey was administered to the AFR Panel in 2019. Survey respondents reported visiting forests in the Ashland Creek watershed less frequently than they did in 2012, and most remain very concerned about the threat of wildfire. Familiarity with AFR has grown substantially; trust in AFR partners remains high; and there is overwhelmingly support for AFR's fuel reduction treatments, as depicted in pre and post-treatment photos. Public support for active management, including thinning and prescribed fire to reduce fuels, has grown substantially over time, as has belief that forests in the region were historically more open than they are today and that public forest lands need large scale restoration. There is very strong agreement that restoration should focus on fuel reduction to enhance ecosystem resilience. Because of AFR, people in Ashland feel safer, and they overwhelmingly support maintaining those treated forests and extending those treatments to adjacent private lands. In short, AFR has strong and persistent public support.

Hiking, admiring the beauty and resting in gratitude

Hike and take a break from life

jog, hike

Hike

Hike

hike, listen and look for birds, look for wildflowers, admire and feel grateful for our trees, try to learn something new.

Hike

Hike

Hike

Mountain bike up the unpaved road.

Hike, mountain bike

Walk

Hike, botanize, birdwatch, take hike with naturalist or ecologist

Hiking

walk

I hike weekly on the ditch trail above Lithia Park and sometimes past Hitt Road. I also ski on Mt. Ashland most days they are open and rondenee ski on some days Mt. Ashland Ski Area is closed.

Hike or trail run

Walk

Run

Hike

Hike the trails and enjoy being in the woods.

Hike

Mostly run on trails - Bandersnatch, white rabbit, Mike Uhtoff, etc. Also some mountain biking.

Ski and hike

Hiking in the White Rabbit trail area.

Mainly walk. We also went up late last November looking for a Christmas tree on the federal land but didn't find anything.

hiking, recreation, work.

Walk

Hike

walk a little

hike

walk

Hiking the trails off Green Meadows, up the hill past the TID ditch, and on the trails and roads near Mt. Ashland. I'd also count skiing on the mountain, mostly downhill.

I am an ecologist, with a former contract with the City to provide data to help with decisions for City staff.

hike, visit art

work

Hike

Hike

Hike/Walk

hike

mostly hikes

hike

hike view wildlife look at fuel loads and overall forest health

Hike, run or Mt bike

Hike, harvest Christmas trees, volunteer projects with Boy Scouts from troop 112

Hiking, hunting

Hike with my dogs

Out for a drive or biking

Usually viewing the forest and lack of native animal inhabitants.

Usually, I just hike.

Walk my dog, or just walk with a friend.

Hike

Mountain Bike

Work done has been successful in places with high concentration of buck brush & manzanita, etc.

It appears that the industry is being proactive and this is a step in the right direction. Unfortunately, Mother Nature and man are the real threat to control issues...

I definitely feel safer because of the controlled burning in the Ashland watershed. I do think there is a lot of misinformation and that the community could be better informed about this ongoing project. What is its cost, who is paying for it, and is there an example in another part of the country of it having been effective? I'm sure there is and maybe I've seen it, but I'd like to see that information again. In other words, could we still be at risk for a devastating fire that could still sweep through our town? Or at least through the hillside areas in Ashland? Thank you! Joan Becich

It's great work. I hope a large portion of our citizens are being exposed to the work being done and the complexities involved in the process.

While some areas can look somewhat stark initially, helping the forest remain healthy and reducing fire danger at the same time is very nice to see.

We shall see what the forests look like in a couple years after the treatments. That would have been helpful to show that as well. They look so denuded immediately after.

It appears, judging by the photos, that the AFR Project is doing an excellent and also a very valuable service to our watershed.

Work is quite labor intensive. Adding grazers back to the forest might reduce the labor need and fuels. Perhaps the Ashland deer can be returned to the forest to eat there.

Controlled burning severely impacts persons in the community with certain health conditions including asthma. Please publicize planned burns very proactively to allow them to take the necessary precautions to breath safely at these times. I do not have this problem.

none

The work you all have been doing it fantastic! I wish it could happen nationwide.

Keep up the good work - but do it selectively where needed that does not adversely affect sensitive areas and species

Looking good.

I am very grateful for all the work being done by AFR to reduce the chance of wildfire in our area. Thank You!

I would like to participate in planning an organized private forest ownership fire reduction effort of some kind in the near future. Owners of large tracts of private or public forest lands have a huge shared responsibility to act responsibly to protect our mutual interests in protecting and restoring a healthy balance for bio-eco-climate relationships with the resulting forest restoration concern. Any such effort to create a public and private partnership will be depend upon it being initiated by a trusted and scientific reliable motivator to finance, encourage and maintain such this needed and important partnership effort.

I am 79 live at 550 conifer way Ashland or since 1974.I have 10 acres on a hill side and have done everything you're doing now plus plant new trees. In Nov est. 1978 we had a fire cleaned things up. Now I cannot get all fire breaks and the lack of rain I have big trees dying

some little ones. Our first winter we were hear we had 50 inches of and was out trying to save our road. I have seen a lot of changes in all things that live in the forest. You had better get the forest cleaned up and have young people out there leaning. When came here I had to lean and I had my son out with me. Charles Miller

All three of the photo pairs show an appropriate treatment given that those sites were not in the McDonald Peak Roadless Area or in other areas not appropriate for active management in the Ashland watershed such as Northern spotted owl or Northern goshawk nesting sites, Pacific fisher denning sites or other sites important for sensitive wildlife or plant species. The photos show that snags and down wood were left and/or perhaps created by the treatment which is important for healthy forest ecosystems. The second two photo pairs appear to show canopy closures at levels that are likely to encourage new growth of shrubs and small trees, whereas the first photo pair shows higher canopy closure which will likely result in a longer period of time before new vegetation again becomes an issue. This represents a conflict that managers and the public should grapple with in a way that attempts to incorporate as much science and an open discussion of values as possible. One of the questions to be grappled with is whether restoration to pre-settlement conditions is a realistic or even desirable goal throughout the Ashland watershed given that such open canopy conditions can become filled with shrubs and small trees which will then need to be treated if the desired condition is to be maintained at significant costs to citizens.

I think the work that I have seen is a good start but I am concerned about maintenance of these areas (this is a big task and stuff grows back incredibly fast). Also the effects of climate change (hotter, dryer summers, more insect infestation plus disease and the proliferation of understory growth) has me concerned that efforts are an uphill battle.

While there are some negatives involved with AFR, I think it's very important. Ashland would certainly end up like Paradise, CA if it wasn't for active forest management in the watershed. This needs to continue. If you let it return to the way it was, what good would that do.

I prefer forest management to forest restoration. I don't think it's remotely possible for us return our previously logged forests to pre-pioneer conditions. That would take 500 years of no fires, continuous maintenance, and to ignore that trees are a renewal resource. Basically we have many, many timbered acres in our area and thought out the western U.S. that should be managed as a crop. I think we should pick a DBH (something like 24") and never cut any trees larger than that. Then manage all of forest stands with the smaller diameter trees for lumber production. If your generation didn't plant it don't cut it. If it's been logged, planted, managed, it should be in a rotation to be use for timber production. Since we have so many people living in the WUI we need more piling and burning so when the fires do come they don't burn as hot and we have a better chance to avoid a total catastrophic whip-out of our community. We have been lucky for a while. Luck only lasts so long.

We support requiring and offering incentives to private forest landowners to make their lands safer. But not doing the work on their lands at no cost to them.

Another aspect of the AFRP that greatly impresses me is that high school juniors and seniors are hired to share in the work, and these students are taught safety lessons at the start of each work day and then educated by an expert in the field at the end of each work day.

Thus, the AFRP is providing the workers and leaders of tomorrow with skills for continuing to manage our forests and the incentive to make forest management a possible career choice. hopefully weather conditions dissipate smoke at high elevation quickly. smoky air in town is detrimental to my health.

I remain concerned about the cost of the project for a fairly limited amount of acreage. There is an awful lot of forested area in our region, and I am dubious that a major amount of it can be tackled without a commercial logging component for revenue. City residents are shouldering a heavy burden of taxation/utility fees, which hit the poorer residents harder than the richer ones. Grants are fine, but again limited in scope. The Forest Resiliency Project and the cooperative efforts involving other groups work fine at micro scale. But as the last legislative session shows, the rest of the state isn't going to pay for extensive work here out of general revenue.

I request more effort going into non-aerobic slash conversion technologies producing a biochar product rather than automatically defaulting to burn treatments and then claiming the benefits of much lower percent of smoke being released compared with wildfire smoke. Don't settle for a wasteful approach when there is so much at stake in getting it right, meaning the amount of forests requiring treatment and volume of carbon to be released into the atmosphere will be staggering, that could be sequestered into the soil as biochar instead. Make keeping the carbon in the soil (from treatment areas) an equally high priority.

Don't stop now! It will be a continuing project forever. Let's suck it up and consider it a cost of the mix of nature and civilization.

Great, except there appears to be a bit too much debris on the forest floor in two of the photos.

I was uncomfortable with "as they see fit" with most organizations even the ones I trust, there is such an issue with ethics, leadership and individuals making choices that are not for the good of the whole...

AFRP has done a fantastic job in our watershed with controlled burn and more that I feel better if a wild fire ran ramp it towards Ashland.

Good program that should be expanded to other communities

Always wondered why more chipping or converting excess vegetation is not mulched on site rather than burn and adversely impact air quality? Fly chipping, grinding, mulching equipment in and use it to rid areas of excess timber and promote natural fertilization. I am a layman and not educated in these processes and assume cost is a factor. Burning piles of collected fuel must be cheaper but given our poor air quality burning seems antiquated and barbaric. Controlled burns are absolutely needed and part of natural process. However burn piles could be chipped or mulched albeit at a higher cost I know. Thx for reading.

Are we supporting this activity by selling timber?

Having had a 30+ year career as a public land management forester, I support the efforts to reduce the fuel load in all forested and range land, public and private.

I am very disappointed in what has occurred these areas. Random piling of slash in areas that will consume native trees when torched. Total destruction of natural habitat needed for wild animals to survive. Habitat consists of four (4) elements. Space, shelter, food and water.

Sadly, these four elements no longer exist in these areas, thus, there are very few animals to be seen. Without just one of these elements, animals cannot survive, so move to other areas where they have all four. Shelter simply does not exist in these areas,

Thank you for doing the work you're doing. With wildfires becoming increasingly common and striking increasingly closer to home, we need this kind of work now more than ever. Thank you for managing our public lands. For adjacent private lands, I would definitely want to see those landowners involved in the work and perhaps paid for timber removed from their property--timber companies can certainly develop replanting plans that call for adequate spacing between trees for fire prevention. Also, some of these questions ask for a one-size approach (such as using absolute words like "all, always, every, no," and "never"). I hedged my answers on these since, generally, speaking, each location and situation needs its own consideration for both the integrity of the end result and the safety of the crew to get there. I can't say that a large diameter tree should never be removed even though generally, those should be the ones left behind for their ability to survive a major fire. And while the urban-wildland interface should be the priority, especially given limited resources, there may be exceptions that make sense to add to the plan. Generally, from what I've seen and heard so far, this is the right project for our area. Thank you, again, for keeping us citizens informed and safe.

I'm glad fire suppression is a priority. I hope the focus continues.

I wish it had begun sooner than it did, but now that it has begun it needs to continue.....if possible to a greater extent.

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