Fire Adapted Ecosystems

Threats

Dense, Overstocked Stands

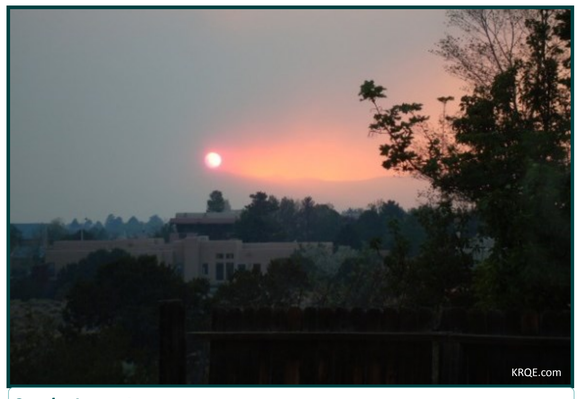
The combination of heavy grazing and fire suppression has allowed small trees to survive and dominate frequent fire ecosystems. The resultant fuel buildup favors intense, stand replacing fires that would have been uncommon historically.

Uncharacteristic Wildfire

Fires in overgrown forests are larger and more destructive.

Damage to Homes and Communities

The 2000 Cerro Grande fire destroyed homes, vehicles and other property in Los Alamos.

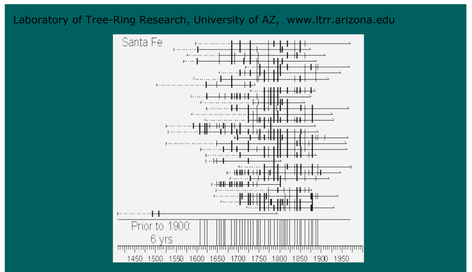


Smoke Impacts

Haze over Santa Fe from the 2013 Thompson Ridge fire. Smoke impacts air quality, people with health problems, and visibility

Habitat

Open stands provide important habitat for turkey, Abert's squirrel, and other wildlife.



Tree Ring Fire Scar Record

Fire history from northern New Mexico vertical lines represent fire scars recorded by a single tree (horizontal lines). Vertical lines at the bottom represent years with at least two trees recording fires (every six years prior to 1900). There have been many fewer fires since the late 1800s.

Management Considerations

Desired Conditions

Resource Benefit Fire

The 2013 Jaroso Fire was not suppressed, but was allowed to burn into the Pecos Wilderness. It restored fire to the ecosystem and saved on the cost of firefighting and reduced risk to firefighters.

Thin and burn

Mechanical thinning followed by low intensity fire can restore a forests to a healthier condition.

Potential Solutions

1)There is a need for incorporating additional direction for an integrated resource approach to prescribed fire activity and flexibility for restoration and maintenance of ecosystems.

2)There is a need for promoting natural and prescribed fire in all ecosystems while addressing public safety and health concerns.

3)There is a need for limiting and reversing woody species encroachment and infill (fire intolerant species in the understory).