

Swan View's News

Fall 2017



Swan View Coalition
3165 Foothill Road
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"Nature and human nature on the same path."

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- Special Issue - *Logging v. Fire, Lies v. Science, Greed v. Nature!*

A smoky fire season is coming to a close in Montana because environmental extremists withdrew their lawsuits and timber sales are once again preventing wildfires. It couldn't be the recent rain and snow!

That's the "logic" applied by Montana's Representative Greg Gianforte, Senator Steve Daines, and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke [when they grandstanded in front of the Lolo Fire in August](#). They blamed timber sale litigation for the fires while ignoring Montana's record drought, heat, lightning, and high winds.

Fortunately, they caught a flurry of criticism from fire ecologists and climate scientists who know better. Not that this has dissuaded them from introducing bills in Congress to fast-track logging and shield it from citizen oversight and legal challenges!

On page 2 we describe our approach to keeping homes safe from wildfire while allowing fire to play its natural role in regenerating forest ecosystems. This includes thinning forests near homes, where it can

do some good, not in the back-country where it makes matters worse.

On page 3 we illustrate how logging robs the forest of the parts that don't burn, the tree trunks, and leaves behind the needles, limbs and brush that does burn. On page 4 we provide a real-world illustration of how thinning forests does not tame fires

driven by drought, heat and wind.

On pages 5-6, we summarize and provide links to some of the science and press debunking the "logging prevents wildfire" myth.

On pages 6 we announce our **November 12 membership meeting** and remind you we need to meet our Cinnabar Match-

ing Grant soon! We're a quarter of the way there, so **please support our work today with a donation that will be doubled by Cinnabar!**

Thank you!

Keith



The Sprague Creek fire creeps through damp cedar-hemlock forest in Glacier NP. Rick Trembath photo.

Protecting Homes as Fire Plays its Natural Role

The Forest Service's own research shows logging far from homes does little to protect them from wildfire and that it is the materials the home is made of and the fuels immediately around the home that determine whether it will burn or not. Logging in the backcountry also robs money and manpower from work that should be done to make homes more fire resistant.

[Forest Service researcher Jack Cohen](#): "Because home ignitions depend on home ignitability, the behavior of wildland fires beyond the home or community site does not necessarily correspond to the potential for [structure] fire losses. Highly ignitable homes can be destroyed during lower-intensity wildfires, whereas homes with low home ignitability can survive high-intensity wildfires."

Swan View Coalition has not stopped logging projects intended to thin forests near homes and communities like Condon, Coram, Martin City, Swan Lake, West Glacier, and the Spotted Bear Ranger Station and guest ranches. We have stopped numerous logging projects in the backcountry that harm fish, wildlife and water quality while being thinly disguised as "fuels reduction" or "forest restoration" projects.

We challenge these logging projects because, as the term "logging" implies, they remove logs that come from the trunk of

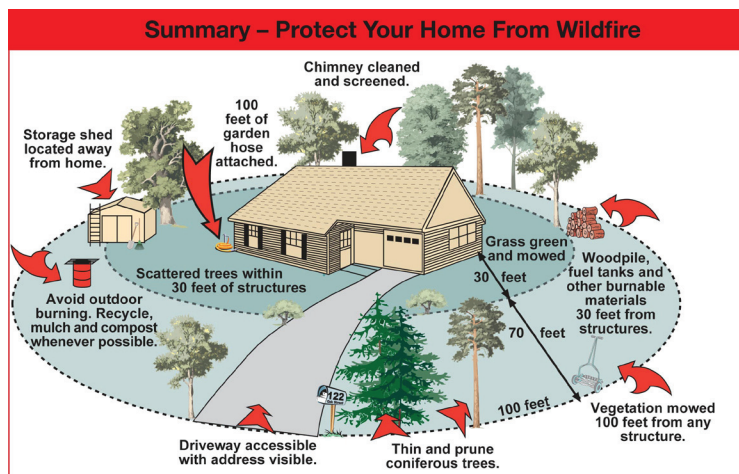
the trees. This is the part of the tree that does not burn during wildfire and is invaluable alive or dead to a wide array of wildlife species and as a crucial storehouse of carbon. Simply put, our politicians and their cronies in the timber industry are lying in claiming: "When we do forest management, we have more habitat, there's more wildlife, there's more hunting opportunities, we have more jobs in our mills, and fires are less intense and don't spread as far." ([Rep. Greg Gianforte](#))

In August we countered some of these claims in [a letter to the editors of Montana newspapers](#),

using interagency publications to describe how thinning forests actually makes them drier and more susceptible to wind and fire. We also got the ultraconservative [Washington Times](#) to at least mention how climate

change is increasing summer heat, drought and the length of the wildfire season.

In the following pages, we'll provide more illustrations and quotes from experts on these matters, along with some links to useful scientific literature. If you too are suspect of the "logging cures all" snake oil being sold for these fire-dependent ecosystems (they depend on fire to remain healthy), keep reading to learn more of why we don't have to destroy wildland habitats to protect our own homes.



[Living with Fire: A Guide for the Homeowner](#)



Logging removes the parts of large trees that don't burn . . . and leaves behind the parts and small trees that do burn!



*Only about 5% of a tree burns during severe wildfire.
Mostly the ground cover burns.
Logging/thinning projects, like this one near Spotted Bear,
don't stop weather-driven wildfire.*



**Soldier Addition Unit 49 Thinned 2013
(Keith Hammer photo 8/27/14)**



**Soldier Addition Unit 49 After Bear Creek Fire 2015
(Keith Hammer photo 9/22/15)**

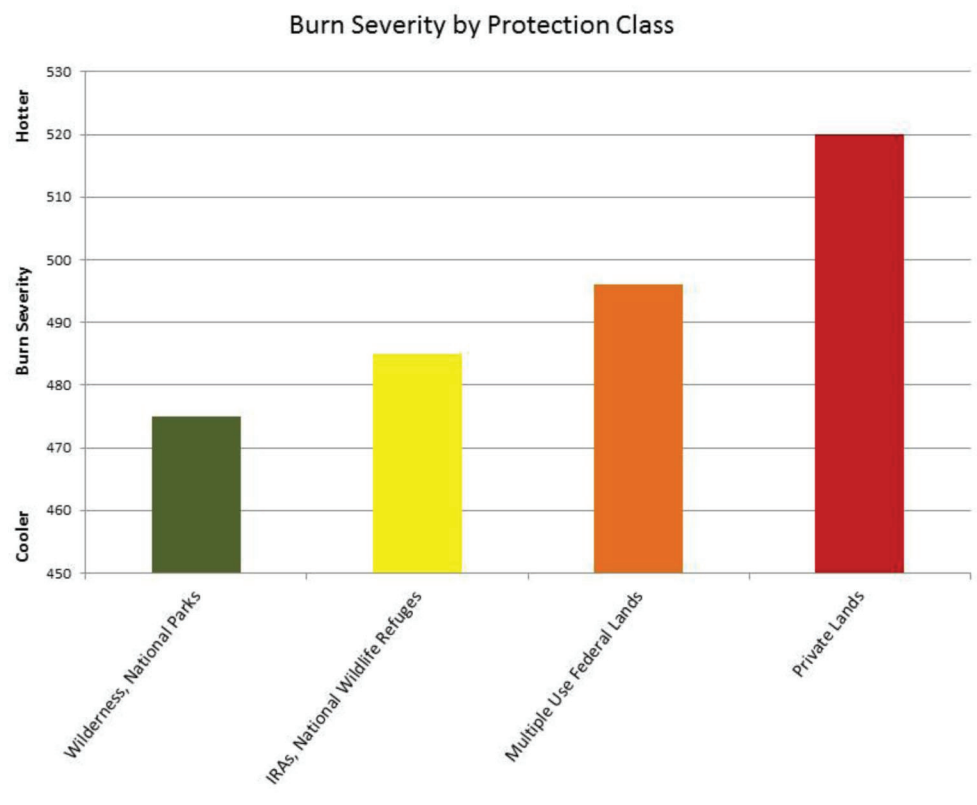
Debunking the “Logging Prevents Wildfire” Myth: Excerpts from the Experts!

“In 2016, in the largest analysis ever on this question, scientists found that forests with the fewest environmental protections and the most logging had the highest — not the lowest — levels of fire intensity.” ([Hanson and Garrity](#) citing [Bradley et al. 2016](#)).

“A comprehensive study . . . thoroughly debunked this notion [that dead trees increase fire intensity] by showing that outbreaks of pine beetles, which can create patches of snag forest habitat, didn’t lead to more intense fires in the area. A more recent study found that forests with high levels of snags actually burn less intensely. This is because flames spread primarily through pine needles and small twigs, which fall to the ground and soon decay into soil shortly after trees die. ([Hanson and Garrity](#) citing [Hart et al 2015](#) and [Meigs et al. 2016](#)).

“[Another] myth is the notion that fire destroys our forests and that we currently have an unnatural excess of fire. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is a broad consensus among scientists that we have considerably less fire of all intensities in our Western U.S. forests compared with natural, historical levels, when lightning-caused fires burned without humans trying to put them out. ([Hanson and Garrity](#) citing [The Ecological Importance of Mixed-Severity Fires](#)).

“What we found was [that] fires burned most intense in previously logged areas, while they burned in natural fire mosaic patterns in wilderness, parks, and roadless areas, thereby, maintaining resilient forests.” ([Testimony of Dr. Dominick DellaSala](#) to U.S. House of Representatives, 9/27/17, with the referenced chart at right).



(More excerpts on next page)

"Thinning too much of the overstory trees in a stand, especially removal of large fire-resistant trees, can increase the rate of fire spread by opening tree canopies and letting in more wind, can damage soils, introduce invasive species that increase flammable understory fuels, and impact wildlife habitat . . . Thinning also requires an extensive and expensive roads network that can degrade water quality by altering hydrological functions, including chronic sediment loads." ([Testimony of Dr. Dominick DellaSala](#)).

"[B]eetle-killed forests are not more susceptible to forest fires . . . because when conifers die . . . the combustible oils in the needles quickly begin to dissipate, needles and small twigs begin to fall to the ground. Without the fine fuels to facilitate fire spread, potential crown fires are actually lowered in forests with beetle mortality." ([Testimony of Dr. Dominick DellaSala](#)).

"I don't think that holds water . . . the assumption that fires are occurring because there is more fuel available to burn than in the past. That's generally not what's driving this. It's the drought." ([University of MT fire ecology professor Philip Higuera](#)).

"[Senator Daines implies] if we do more logging, more vegetation management, more thinning, we won't have as many acres burned, and we won't be breathing as much smoke; and that's just absolutely not true." ([Forest ecology professor Andrew Larson](#)).

"[The Caribou Fire] handily tore through control lines built along old logging roads, as well as through patches of forest that had been previously harvested." ([Rexford District Ranger Bryan Donner](#)).

"The [1994] Little Wolf fire leap-frogged from clearcut to clearcut, doubling or even tripling the burning speed of the fire." (Flathead National Forest fire officer Dave Bunnell in the Daily Inter Lake, 8/28/94).

"We need to prepare to continue to have fire; and thinning and managing forest is not a panacea and it's not going to solve the problem." ([MT DNRC fire officer Angela Wells](#)).

Annual Meeting Nov 12, Followed by Potluck and Music!

Join us for our Membership Meeting Sunday, November 12, at 4pm! We meet at the Mountain Brook Community Library at 2353 Foothill Road.

We'll spend an hour electing officers, discussing a bit of business, and summarizing the past year's challenges and accomplishments!

Then we'll enjoy a potluck dinner and socializing in a relaxed atmosphere!

Dinner will be followed by a regularly scheduled Swan Range Community Music Jam Session at 6pm for those who wish to stay! You don't have to play an instrument to enjoy this low key get together!

We hope you can join us for a bit of business and a whole lot of FUN!

You can also help us meet our Cinnabar Matching Grant by renewing your membership dues (see next page)!

Your Donations Again Doubled by Cinnabar Foundation!

[Cinnabar Foundation](#) has increased its Challenge Grant to us this year to \$4,000 - **so be among the first to donate to get your money doubled by Cinnabar!**

We rely in large part on member donations to fund our work protecting habitat for fish, wildlife and people. You can help us broaden our membership base by giving Gift Memberships at \$25 each, either on-line or using the donation form below! **It's easy to join others in supporting our work:**



1. Send a check to Swan View Coalition at 3165 Foothill Road, Kalispell, MT 59901 - or -
2. Use your credit card securely on-line at www.swanview.org or www.swanrange.org, by clicking on the [Donate Now button](#) found there (or above)!

[Network for Good](#) handles your transaction securely for us and informs us immediately via email of your donation by credit card. You can also choose to give monthly, quarterly or yearly there to make it easier or more affordable (or change your mind anytime)! If you have other info you want to get to us, such as Gift Membership info, simply email it to keith@swanview.org or mail them to the address in #1, above.



If there is pink on your mailing label, it means you haven't donated in nearly a year or more. Please make a donation so we can keep sending you our newsletter and continue our work!

- Here's \$25 to cover my minimum dues, newsletters, alerts, and Swan Ranger Reports.
- Here's \$50 to help restore a bit of peace and quiet to America's public lands.
- Here's \$100 to help keep forest roads from ending up in America's bull trout streams.
- Here's \$500 to help secure grizzly, lynx and wolverine habitat for future generations.
- Here's \$_____ to help save the world, one mountain range and one river at a time!
- Here's \$_____ for _____ Gift Memberships at a minimum of \$25 each. I've included each recipient's name, mailing address, email address, and my greeting on separate paper.
- As a gift of appreciation for my donation, please send me the Swan/Flathead history booklet "The Lineage of Chief Aeneas: A History of People and Place" and/or a Swan Ranger patch (circle "hang-loop" or "sew-on").
- Save paper! Email my newsletters to _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

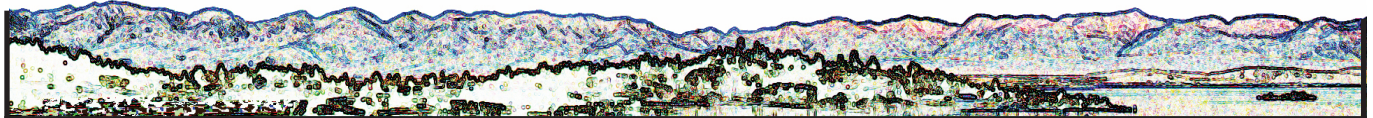
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Special Issue: Logging v. Fire, Lies v. Science, Greed v. Nature

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