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PUBLIC FORUM

We need each other's help

Time is running out, friends.

If you are reading this, you have the ability to get the word out to others to be an influence for positive change for millions of fellow Americans.

Over 46 years ago, I was getting my degree in Natural Resources Mgt at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. Even "way back" then the following was common knowledge (in the science world) about catastrophic fires:

- They sterilize the soil and bake it, like an adobe brick
- They destroy land and water ecosystems and their

biodiversity

- They fill the air and water with pollutants harmful to millions of people
- They can be avoided with proper, science-backed and historically proven methods of forest conservation
- They were the result of faulty, philosophical ideas (rather than science) that pushed a hands-off mentality upon governing agencies

Around 1980 I had a glimmer of hope when I learned, and saw firsthand, that Sequoia Nat Park was actually able to put science into practice! The park was established in 1890 to ensure that Giant Sequoias would always be around for us, but it took decades for them to realize the only places where regrowth of Giant Sequoias occurred was on road banks where the ground cover had been removed to expose mineral soil. Unfortunately, that would be the worst place to allow them to grow.

So, they did it! They used carefully controlled burns to clear the underbrush so these giants would continue to reseed and grow for my grandkids to enjoy. But this victory did not spread to other forests around the country.

My hope in seeing intelligent forestry practices put into place on a large scale faded year after year, until early 2024 when I discovered the incredible work of Forest Bridges (thank you, News Review!). Finally, the timber industry and environmentalists, normally on opposite sides of an issue, were coming together to learn real science and centuries of proper care from indigenous cultures.

There is still hope, but right now the roadblocks to success for all of us are from red tape and traditions in governing agencies. But you can help! Please take some time to explore what Forest Bridges is working on at www.forestbridges.org. If you "Become a Friend" (top of home page), you will receive quarterly progress reports and relevant articles like the recent drone photography project tying history, science, and poor forestry practices together. These increased "Friends" numbers will also show the governing agencies the growing number of concerned citizens. Donations are optional, easy, and needed to keep this vital work moving forward.

But time is running out. I'm not being dramatic, just realistic. The news is full of coast-to-coast examples of catastrophic forest fires that could have been avoided. We cannot control the drought conditions or the high winds, but we absolutely can drastically reduce the fuel load that contributes dramatically to their spread.

What will it cost? Is it worth it? If we consider the "business as usual" approach that is happening now, and we look at the BILLIONS of dollars in destroyed property, businesses, jobs, and the health impacts on millions of people, both immediate and long term, then yes, it is worth it!

Please spread the word to everyone you know who cares about the beauty and measurable health benefits of nature, reduced fires, healthier air, a sustainable timber industry, and future generations.

WILLIAM MCCLENDON
Roseburg