

BOOK REVIEW

Prescribed Burning in Fire-Prone Landscapes. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* Online Issue Number 1, Volume 11, August 2013. Ecological Society of America, Washington, D.C., USA. <http://www.esajournals.org/toc/fron/11/s1>

The Ecological Society of America journal *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* recently published an open access special issue of interest to *Fire Ecology* readers, “Prescribed Burning in Fire-Prone Landscapes.” The seven papers in this special issue provide an international perspective on the basis for and use of prescribed burning, as well as other human uses of fire, such as wildland fire use and traditional indigenous burning practices.

The first four papers in the issue cover prescribed fire management in four different regions: Mediterranean landscapes in southern Europe, forests and woodland in North America, eucalyptus forests in southwestern Australia, and fynbos shrubland and heathlands in South Africa. Each paper discusses the historical context of fire management, current prescribed fire policies, effects of prescribed fire on ecosystem processes, and efficacy of prescribed fire for achieving management objectives such as conservation of biological diversity and carbon management. These papers each place prescribed burning in an ecological context with concise descriptions of the local floras and natural fire regimes, one of the most informative elements of the special issue.

The latter three papers present case studies of innovative prescribed burning practices. Notably, two of these case studies draw on traditional ecological knowledge to frame prescribed burning: burning as a component of Mayan milpa (a swidden agroforestry system) in Latin America, and application of aboriginal burning practices to abate greenhouse-gas emissions in northern Australia. The third case study describes the emergence of burn cooperatives comprised of private citizens as a mech-

anism to overcome sociopolitical barriers to the use of prescribed burning to restore Great Plains grasslands encroached upon by woody plants.

A few consistent themes emerge from this collection of papers. The historical northern European view of fire as a destructive agent at odds with agronomic models of forest and rangeland management transcends geographic boundaries. Conifer woodlands of western North America, eucalypt forests of southwest Australia, and the hyperdiverse fynbos of South Africa all share a common history of fire suppression. Another emergent theme is that cultural, social, and political factors form the primary barriers to increased use of prescribed burning. Scientific knowledge and operational capacity are generally not limiting to prescribed burning in most regions reviewed (with the possible exception of southern Europe).

This special issue on prescribed fire management will be most useful for instructors of university-level fire ecology and fire management courses, and for instructors in professional prescribed fire training programs. This issue can be used as a starting point for enriching regionally focused curricula with global perspectives. Strategies for implementing prescribed fire programs vary globally. Infusing academic and professional training programs with global case studies in fire ecology and management will encourage innovation and creative thinking.

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