

Submitted: 12/31/2018 10:52 PM

My teeth clench when I hear the "foresters" who taught people how to exploit the forests, now explain how to "man-age" them to avoid fire.

Journalist interviewers don't know enough to question what they are told, and politicians parrot the same propaganda.

While the California fires were not fires in forests, Trump is right about bad forest management being responsible for forest fires. Of course, the problem is not what he thinks. The original sin was clear cutting the continent east to west. Everything now suggested is a desperate attempt to mitigate that. It is not easy to get a fire to rage through a big, old, closed canopy forest. This is especially true in northwest rainforests. Old forests are cool and retain moisture.

Forest "man-agers" are promoting the idea of thinning and prescribed burning of undergrowth in a vain attempt to imitate those mature native forests. This practice can expose the soil to sun and wind increasing its susceptibility to fire. When I was taking OSU forestry classes, we toured a property completely devoid of undergrowth. The fir trees were actually evenly spaced in rows. This was their idea of model forest regrowth, and I was strongly rebuked for saying it was not a forest but a tree farm.

Oregon's climate plan talks about emission controls and glaringly avoids deforestation. We need to keep saying that chopping forests is a massive contributor to carbon buildup in our atmosphere. Despite industry propaganda, several hundred young replanted trees per acre do not absorb the carbon of the enormous old original trees. The undergrowth in a natural forest not only also absorbs carbon, but is alive with habitat for birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, all kinds of insects and fungi, and micro-organisms; synergistically making a real biodiverse forest. As some of the undergrowth is shaded out it decays (which is habitat) it eventually becomes soil providing nutrients. Interrupting this natural process, this web of life, is what we seem to be so good at doing. We see the difference in the natural forest on our property compared to the tree farm next to us. Be very skeptical of so-called foresters whose jobs depend on their latest "forest health" promotions. The practices they promote may actually create deadscapes.

Jan nelson, farmer and forestland owner, 85354 Doane rd., rural
Eugene, OR, 97402 541 485 1426