

Range Mgmt. Adv. Comm.
Board of Forestry
Resources Bldg. Room 1506-12
1416 Ninth St.
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Sept. 5 2914

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SEP 08 2014
BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION

As a former Board of Forestry and RMAC member I would like to comment on your charge in general and Sept. 10 agenda items 7 and 8 more specifically.

Having observed vegetation growth and various management practices throughout the state for many years my observations can be summarized as follows: Vegetation in general tends to grow until limited by available moisture. In drought years all the vegetation is stressed, and dies. Dead woody vegetation generally doesn't decompose in our dry climate and creates a long lived fire hazard. Vegetation, especially perennial vegetation, needs to be managed to minimize the creation of high and volatile fuel loads.

There are few ways to prevent or manage the buildup of dead vegetation. They are

- 1) Grazing (including cattle, sheep, goats and native animals)
- 2) Timber and wood harvesting to thin stands.
- 3) Prescribed fire
- 4) Wild fire

All are more or less controversial and have drawbacks, but our present misguided "preservation" mentality and budget choices inevitably leads by default to 4) Wild fires.

Wild fires are the current default management of choice in much of the state, and this frequently leads to dramatic long lasting (and in my view, undesirable)vegetation changes. Perhaps the poster child for this (disastrous in my opinion) technique is Cuyamaca State Park where the 2003 Cedar fire in an unmanaged conifer forest lead to conversion of much of the area to chaparral. Grazing had been removed many years before, no significant forest management had occurred , and the fuel load was enormous. The unintended result of attempting to passively preserve an area led to its demise.

I believe that a active vegetation management program on private state, and federal lands is necessary throughout most of the state to minimize long term environmental disasters.. This program to be successful must include grazing, timber and wood harvesting , prescribed fire, and the judicious use of herbicides and replanting native trees. Consistent funding, government policies and public acceptance are , of course , major impediments that must be solved.

I recognize I'm probably "preaching to the choir". Please let me know if I can do anything useful.


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