



Science Changes Smokey's Mind

Smokey Bear's new policy is to prevent bad forest fires by creating the conditions to let the good ones burn.

-- a conversation with Norm Christensen



(Ann Kellan)

Our obsession with preventing all forest fires has made conditions worse, especially in dry areas of the US.

(Norm Christensen)

We are in a crisis situation.

(Ann Kellan)

Norm Christensen, a fire ecologist at Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences, says by not letting small fires burn, dense forest underbrush has grown which kindles enormous, out of control wildfires.

(Norm Christensen)

They will threaten communities. They will threaten people. They will result in the loss of life.

(Ann Kellan)

Removing all the flammable underbrush in our national forests would cost too much, so Christensen says the best approach is to target specific areas to clear.

(Norm Christensen)

The most important priority is looking at those areas where we have people and their homes at risk. That's where we need to focus our attention.

(Ann Kellan)

And as Smokey Bear might say, only you can protect yourself from forest fires.

(Norm Christensen)

Landowners who live in forested areas should be taking a number of different precautions, partly to do with their land. Clearing away small fuel, clearing fuel away from the house.

(Ann Kellan)

For more about what you can do and what science is discovering about protecting forests from wildfires, put earthfile dot o r g in your web browser. I'm Ann Kellan and that's another one for the earth file.