



# WILDFIRE STRATEGY 2020-2022

October 2020 | Environment Program

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**(Cover image)** A firefighter with the U.S. Forest Service does an annual prescribed burn on 336 acres of land at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge in Commerce City, Colorado. Photo by Helen H. Richardson/The Denver Post via Getty Images

# I. Introduction

Extreme wildfire events with devastating consequences for people and the environment have captured the world's attention in recent years. Increasing wildfire size and frequency are contributing to rapidly changing forest biodiversity across the western United States and affecting human safety, groundwater management, forestry, recreation, and more.

The unprecedented 2020 western U.S. wildfire season is reflective of a number of drivers that have led to extreme wildfire events. A history of fire suppression policy, which attempted to eliminate fires from our landscapes, has led to dense vegetation growth in some forest types. This creates a high “fuel load,” leading to more intense fires when a landscape does burn. Historic and ongoing development patterns have placed many homes in high fire risk areas, requiring the deployment of significant and costly firefighting resources during wildfire events. Largely built without wildfire resilience principles in mind, these communities are facing loss of property and life. Finally, climate change has exacerbated the weather patterns that lead to conditions ripe for wildfire. A [recent study](#) found that climate change has already doubled the risk of extreme fire weather conditions in California. Climate change leads to prolonged drought, higher temperatures that dry out vegetation, and more lightning strikes. This year's wildfire season might be unusually active, but it was not entirely unexpected given these drivers.

Recent catastrophic fires have heightened the awareness of both residents and decision-makers in the western United States, along with an appetite for changes that will better protect communities and the environment. A growing number of local governments, states, and the federal government are taking action to strengthen wildfire resilience, drawing on both proven approaches and promising new solutions.

The Hewlett Foundation has launched a three-year wildfire strategy aimed at supporting grantees in creating a wildfire-resilient western United States. The western U.S. experiences significant wildfire risk compared to other regions of the country, and the foundation already has a robust network of conservation-focused grantee partners in this region through its [Western Conservation strategy](#). Additionally, the Hewlett Foundation addresses climate change and its solutions through its [Climate Initiative strategy](#). This wildfire strategy connects to both. And while this strategy is west-wide, emphasis will be placed on four states—California, Washington, Montana, and Colorado<sup>1</sup>—that offer new opportunities for policy interventions.

To inform opportunities to improve wildfire resilience, we conducted a literature review and extensive interviews with more than 100 wildfire practitioners, tribal wildfire experts, state and federal policy experts, think tanks and researchers, conservation non-profits, land use planning experts, modelers, insurance experts, public health professionals, journalists, and philanthropies.

## II. The Problem

Wildfires are devastating when they damage lives, families, properties, economic livelihoods, or ecosystem health. But wildfires can be beneficial and necessary, particularly on landscapes where plant and animal communities are wildfire-dependent, as is the case for many western ecosystems. Wildfires from both natural and human causes have shaped the North American landscape for millennia. Nearly all landscapes across North America burned historically, many with high frequency.

The problem is that we are seeing more extreme wildfire events—unusually large, intense, and destructive fires due to a century of fire suppression and exclusion, development of homes and other built infrastructure in high fire risk areas, and climate change—that have significant human and ecological impacts:

**Human casualties.** Human lives are in imminent danger when wildfires reach communities, particularly those unprepared for wildfire. Many communities rely on career and volunteer firefighters to bear the burden in solving a communal wildfire problem, exacerbating the risk to first responders.

**Health impacts.** Wildfire smoke is composed of a mix of gases and fine particles that can be dangerous if inhaled. Extensive scientific evidence has demonstrated health effects in response to particulate matter exposure, ranging from eye and respiratory tract irritation to more serious effects, including reduced lung function, pulmonary inflammation, bronchitis, exacerbation of asthma and cardiovascular diseases, and premature death. Communities already **overburdened by air pollution**—which often include those in lower socioeconomic positions and communities of color—are particularly impacted by the additional burden of wildfire smoke.

**Loss of and damage to buildings and infrastructure.** Wildfires frequently burn buildings and infrastructure, particularly when they are not constructed with “fire-safe” materials and practices.

**Environmental impacts.** While environmental impact can be difficult to evaluate, some recent fires in the West have been uncharacteristic in size and intensity, threatening wildlife and habitat and resulting in the loss of ecosystem services, including impacts on watershed health, harm to soil microbes, and the loss of topsoil and organic materials.

**Economic impacts.** Wildfires can result in interruptions to businesses, including loss of customer base, employment, vital infrastructure, local tax revenue, and government capacity, as well as disruption of various services such as electricity and transportation.<sup>2</sup>

### A. Causes

Wildfires are not always destructive. But extreme wildfire events in the western United States have increased primarily due to (1) a series of fire and forest management decisions since European settlement that typically resulted in eliminating fire from the landscape, or “fire exclusion,” and the removal of shared responsibility for fire from many stakeholders, (2) historic development patterns and continued expansion of the wildland-urban interface (WUI) through development of buildings and other built infrastructure in fire-prone areas with minimal or no consideration of wildfire risk, and (3) climate change.

#### 1. A century of fire exclusion and suppression

Gifford Pinchot, the first U.S. Forest Service Chief, viewed fire exclusion and suppression as necessary to managing U.S. forest reserves. **The Great Fire of 1910** (also known as the Big Burn or Big Blowup)—during which nearly 90 people died and entire communities in Idaho and Montana burned to the ground—solidified the Forest Service’s view on fire, as well as public support for fire exclusion and the government’s role in carrying out this responsibility. It was not until 1978 that the U.S. Forest Service acknowledged for the first time that not all fire is bad. By then, forests had been shaped by almost a century of fire suppression.

Fire exclusion and suppression practices are in direct contrast to pre-European fire regimes in the West, including Indigenous use of fire on the landscape. For millennia, many tribes used fire to improve the quantity, quality, and functionality of valued resources and habitats.

In many forested ecosystems in the West, fire exclusion and suppression has led to a buildup of fuels,—dead or living combustible materials that can include needles, twigs, shrubs, downed trees, and living trees—leading to uncharacteristically large, severe, and costly wildfires with increasing threats to human life, property, and ecosystem health when a fire does burn. On landscapes that historically experienced wildfires with high frequency (defined as 35 years or less between fire events), the average time between fire events has more than quadrupled across a significant portion of the U.S.

## Barriers

On many, but not all, of these landscapes, land managers need to increase the pace and scale of active management, such as prescribed fire, managed wildfire, and mechanical thinning, for wildfire and ecological resilience. However, while many land managers increasingly acknowledge the useful role of active management, they still face many barriers to returning fire to the landscape. This strategy will address a few key barriers, recognizing that there are several others not covered here.

There is **insufficient funding and capacity** for increasing the pace and scale of active management for wildfire-resilient landscapes in the western United States. As a result, federal, tribal, and state agencies only treat a fraction of lands that would benefit from more active management. Many small private landowners also lack the resources and incentives to actively manage their properties.

Many **Indigenous communities have been marginalized and prohibited from using effective fire management practices** to steward their ancestral lands. Despite their vested interest, knowledge, and **tremendous skillset** in living with and managing fire, tribes do not have equitable access to wildfire policymaking and practice. This both undermines tribal sovereignty and prevents other land managers from learning from tribal expertise.

Land managers also face numerous **institutional inefficiencies and policy barriers to using prescribed fire**. As described below, prescribed fire is one of the more effective and cost-efficient means of managing vegetation for multiple purposes, including hazard reduction and ecosystem restoration or maintenance. It is therefore a critical management tool for returning fire to the landscape.

## 2. Development of the wildland-urban interface

There is no single definition of the wildland-urban interface (WUI). For this strategy, we define it broadly as any developed area where buildings or other built infrastructure are at risk from wildfire. The WUI is where wildfires have the greatest potential to result in negative impacts to communities.

In the western United States, the **percentage of population** residing in the WUI ranges from 33% in California to 82% in Wyoming. Living in the WUI, especially with inadequate preparedness for wildfire events, can pose grave threats to life and property.

**Eighty-four percent** of what could become a WUI area in the western United States is not yet developed, and the WUI is the fastest-growing land use type in the United States. This means there is also a critical opportunity to improve community wildfire resilience through land use planning and policies in these areas of potential development.

WUI development places more communities in high fire risk areas and increases the risk of wildfire ignitions because of human activity. It also adds complexity for land managers working to restore fire in the surrounding landscape. In addition, WUI development increases the costs of wildfires because communities are putting more buildings and infrastructure in the path of fire.

## Barriers

For existing structures in the WUI, communities can [harden their homes](#) and [maintain defensible space](#) for wildfire resilience. For proposed development in the WUI, communities must take steps to internalize the currently external costs of wildfire risk when making land use planning and development decisions. In other words, communities should ask themselves under what circumstances it makes sense to develop in areas of wildfire risk, and when the risks are simply too high.

Wildfire risk reduction is not consistently and comprehensively addressed within current state and local land use planning and development decisions. In many western states and regions, building codes do not require fire-safe building in the WUI, and zoning regulations rarely consider wildfire risk.

A number of competing planning priorities are driving continued development of communities in wildfire-prone areas. New development in high wildfire hazard areas generates property taxes that help fund local governments. Additionally, the housing crisis facing many regions of the western United States is pushing people out of urban centers and driving housing demand outwards.

Local governments and residents often lack the resources to achieve wildfire resilience for existing WUI areas. Maintaining defensible space and home hardening may be financially infeasible for many residents. Local governments may not have the capacity to plan, coordinate, or even participate in wildfire adaptation work. For example, they may not have the expertise or financial resources to enact or enforce local defensible space regulations and incorporate wildfire risk into land use planning.

### 3. Climate change

Climate change both contributes to and is exacerbated by catastrophic wildfire events. In the western United States, the higher temperatures and changing precipitation patterns associated with climate change already appear to be contributing to drier fuels and are predicted to contribute to drought and extended wildfire seasons. Extreme wildfire events, in turn, can release significant amounts of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Hewlett Foundation has a major Climate Initiative strategy that seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enabling this wildfire strategy to focus on the first two drivers—a history of fire suppression and development of the WUI.

### III. Pathways to success

Given the widespread impact of extreme wildfire events on communities and the environment, the western United States cannot afford inaction. Working toward wildfire resilience means saving lives, improving public health, protecting homes and businesses, improving ecosystem health and resilience, conserving biodiversity, supporting Indigenous knowledge and practice, and building stronger communities.

Continually rebuilding after recent catastrophic fires and knowing that more will follow, both residents and decision-makers in the western United States are increasingly aware that changes are needed.

There are myriad opportunities for philanthropic support, including bringing together siloed stakeholders and supporting analysis of and advocacy for wildfire policy and funding solutions. The Hewlett Foundation is well-positioned to contribute, in large part because our Western Conservation strategy already is working with a range of stakeholders on land management and coalition-building. The Climate Initiative also works with western states to support state collaborations and state-based climate policies. Some of Hewlett's grantees already lead or support wildfire-related work in protecting and enhancing our public and working lands, or are well-positioned to do so.

The foundation will focus on addressing the two primary drivers of extreme wildfire events detailed above by supporting grantees working through diverse coalition-building and policy advocacy to restore fire to the landscape and create fire adapted communities. While other facets of wildfire are also critical to address, such as wildfire response, community emergency preparedness, and long-term community recovery from wildfires, we are focusing on addressing the elements that influence the risk and severity of wildfire events, rather than conducting damage control once a wildfire has already occurred.

Through this wildfire strategy, the Hewlett Foundation is investing \$2 million a year in wildfire resilience from 2020 to 2022. Grantmaking will focus on California, Washington, Montana, and Colorado, but will not preclude federal-level efforts that impact all western states. According to experts we consulted, these states present realistic opportunities where relatively small investments can feasibly yield meaningful progress on and investment in wildfire resilience and generate lessons learned for other states.

The opportunities fall into four areas of focus: (A) prescribed fire policy and management; (B) tribal leadership for wildfire resilience; (C) land use planning and development in the WUI; and (D) funding for wildfire resilience. In each area, the foundation will primarily support grantees that are exploring and pursuing collaborative policy solutions through diverse coalition-building, while recognizing that other activities—such as scientific research, technological development, and workforce development—are also important components in making progress.

This amount of philanthropic funding from the Hewlett Foundation is a small fraction of the philanthropic investment needed for wildfire resilience. The foundation is actively working to attract additional philanthropic investment and help funders collaborate to achieve greater impact.

#### The theory of change

To help build and sustain the field, we will work across the four areas of focus to strengthen grantee capacity and enable greater stakeholder coordination and collaboration in the four states. The “traditional” field of wildfire professionals and conservationists have made important but insufficient progress in moving toward wildfire-resilient landscapes and communities. As we experience increasingly extreme wildfire seasons, the intersections between wildfires and many other fields—including climate change, public health, social justice, water, energy, labor, and housing—are becoming increasingly clear. We are therefore faced, in this moment, with both an incredible need and incredible opportunity to build stronger and more diverse coalitions to secure the forest and fire policy solutions we need for a more resilient future. This diversity must include Indigenous communities and other impacted communities of color.

The foundation is partnering with and supporting organizations that bring state-level policy advocacy expertise, forest and fire policy expertise, and the capacity to build relationships beyond the traditional wildfire community to build these coalitions.

## A. Prescribed fire policy and management

“Fuel” refers to the dead or living combustible materials found in forests, and can include needles, twigs, shrubs, downed trees, and living trees. Fuels management is critical to reducing the extent, intensity, and severity of wildfire when it occurs in ecosystems adapted to frequent fire.

The three primary methods for managing fuels<sup>3</sup> are prescribed fire, managed wildfire, and non-fire treatments:

1. Prescribed fire, also referred to as prescribed or controlled burning, involves lighting a fire in an area after careful planning and under controlled conditions to achieve specific natural resource management objectives, such as improved wildlife habitat, water quality, and wildfire risk reduction.
2. Managed fire refers to a strategic choice to use unplanned ignitions to achieve natural resource management objectives. It is typically used on federal lands; most state and local jurisdictions are statutorily constrained in using managed fire.
3. Non-fire methods of management, including mechanical thinning, are often used to change vegetation composition and structure to reduce fire hazard.

Hewlett’s strategy will focus on encouraging use of prescribed fire because it is one of the more effective and cost-efficient means of managing vegetation for multiple purposes, including hazardous fuel reduction and ecosystem restoration or maintenance. Unlike managed fire, prescribed fire can be used near developed areas and across private, state, and federal lands, and it can be done at times that mitigate communities’ exposure to smoke. Prescribed fire also reduces surface fuel to enable easier fire management, which mechanical thinning may not do. In some cases, prescribed fire should be used in conjunction with managed fire and/or mechanical thinning.

Research has found that large areas of the West would benefit from [expanded use of prescribed burns](#), including significant portions of California, Washington, Montana, and Colorado. The wildfire community has already laid the groundwork. For example:

- Researchers have completed high-level assessments of the prescribed fire policy and regulatory landscape, identifying liability concerns, funding and capacity constraints, challenges sharing resources across agencies, and short burn windows as some of the barriers to burning in the West.
- California’s agency responsible for fire protection, CAL FIRE, has invested in dedicated crews of wildfire professionals for increasing the pace and scale of fuel reduction and land restoration treatments, which includes prescribed burns.
- The Montana-Idaho Airshed Group is run by and for federal and state land managers and large private landowners to coordinate burning activities and streamline communication with state air quality regulatory bodies.

The Hewlett Foundation is supporting organizations working to further research and advance effective policy and regulatory solutions that will safely increase the use of prescribed burns in the West.

## B. Tribal leadership for wildfire resilience

A number of stakeholders need to be engaged toward a more wildfire-resilient western United States. In particular, while many Indigenous communities have been marginalized and prohibited from using effective fire management practices, they are uniquely positioned to teach other communities and federal, state, and private land managers in the West how to live with fire. Since time immemorial, Indigenous people in what we now call the United States have been using fire management practices to steward landscapes. While most lands and associated wildfires today are managed by non-tribal entities, Indigenous knowledge holders are vital leaders in advancing wildfire resilience. Many Indigenous tribes historically lived within fire-prone ecosystems. Many were, and still are, both fire adapted and fire dependent. Cultural burns are used to foster and enhance water, food, materials, medicine, and vegetation for the benefit of people and the environment.

Tribes have relied on good relationships with individual U.S. Forest Service forest supervisors in the past to partner on forest management, and networks to support Indigenous leadership and knowledge exchange have also arisen in recent years. For example, the [Indigenous Peoples Burning Network](#) launched in 2015 to achieve fire-related cultural restoration in large landscapes to perpetuate Indigenous traditions and environmental health. This network has also helped increase prescribed burning through family-led burning and Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges (TREX). Tribes, including the Yurok and Karuk tribes in Northern California, have been critical members of TREX, which provides experiential training that builds local capacity for fire management.

However, capacity constraints and structural inequities continue to hinder the ability of Indigenous communities to implement their fire practices. Historic government fire suppression policies and rules for who can put fires on the land have criminalized the use of fire by the average person, including Indigenous people. For example, in 1850, the first session of the California State Legislature enacted the Act for the Government of Protection of Indians, which outlawed intentional burning in the state. Despite their vested interest and tremendous skillset in living with fire, tribes do not have equitable access to wildfire policymaking and practice.

The Hewlett Foundation is therefore supporting grantees providing capacity-building for tribes in California, Washington, Montana, and Colorado that wish to lead and participate in state- and federal-level problem-solving around forest and fire policy and management.

### C. Land use planning and development in the WUI

Many communities in the western United States were and continue to be developed with little to no regard for meaningfully or comprehensively reducing wildfire risk. Sole reliance on government firefighting capacity to protect communities from extreme wildfire events through a policy of exclusion and suppression has failed. Recognizing that in much of the western United States, fire is an inevitable and often necessary part of the landscape, communities must become fire adapted.

The steps residents can take to make their own homes and neighborhoods more wildfire resilient are well understood. Limiting flammable vegetation around the home and choosing fire-resistant building materials and construction techniques make homes safer—strategies that can be facilitated through land use planning. Land use planning goes beyond the individual homeowner. It also includes zoning and subdivision codes that regulate type and intensity of residential, commercial, and industrial uses; watershed management plans, which can protect water resources through fuel treatments for wildfire risk reduction; and land preservation strategies such as new parks to create buffers between wildfire-prone areas and structures. Land use planning tools can address wildfire risk not only for existing structures, but also for new development.

Several programs already exist to assist communities and property owners in becoming more wildfire resilient. [FireWise USA®](#), which is co-sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service and Department of the Interior, is a voluntary nationwide program that provides many resources, such as free trainings and education and awareness campaigns. The [California Fire Safe Council](#) complements this work by managing federal grants to local community groups working on wildfire prevention activities and providing technical assistance, while the [Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network](#) connects community leaders across the country to share resources and lessons learned.

The [Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire \(CPAW\)](#) program provides technical assistance for communities for comprehensive land use planning in the wildland-urban interface. Summit County, Colorado was the first community to receive CPAW support. The County has taken progressive steps to enact land use planning regulations that will reduce wildfire risk, such as requirements for wildfire-resistant landscaping and defensible space, adequate emergency access, non-combustible fencing near structures, and storage of firewood away from structures during wildfire season.

Despite these networks and resources, many local jurisdictions continue to lack the funding and capacity to create fire adapted communities. The Hewlett Foundation is supporting organizations working to explore and advocate for state and federal policies and programs that further incentivize local jurisdictions facing wildfire risk to invest in wildfire resilience for existing and future buildings and infrastructure.

## D. Funding for wildfire resilience

The vast majority of wildfire-related spending currently goes toward wildfire suppression. For example, CAL FIRE, California’s Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, had wildland fire response expenditures upwards of \$1 billion annually for each fiscal year from 2014 to 2018. In comparison, California’s 2019-2020 budget proposal includes \$235 million for forest health and fire prevention, an amount which may be unstable in future years as the economic impacts of COVID-19 affect the state’s Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund—the primary source of funding for wildfire prevention. Even then, California is an extreme outlier among western states in the size of its recent investments in wildfire prevention and resilience. At the federal level, even understanding the total annual expenditures for various wildfire prevention activities can be a challenge.

Additional investments in wildfire resilience activities across the western United States are critically needed. Economic recovery efforts associated with COVID-19 may provide near-term opportunities for additional investment in forest restoration work. Otherwise, the impact of COVID-19 on state and local budgets may constrain the field’s ability to secure additional public funding for wildfire prevention. As a result, in the near-term, in addition to supporting grantees exploring public funding for wildfire, the Hewlett Foundation will support grantees that are exploring innovative financing mechanisms that do not exclusively rely on public funding, including bonds that rely on private capital, partnerships with utilities, and exploration of forest product industries that provide wildfire risk reduction, economic development, and climate benefits.

Over the next three years, the foundation is:

1. Supporting grantees that defend existing funding for wildfire resilience and identify opportunities to extract more value from the wildfire resilience dollars already available at the federal level and in California, Washington, Montana, and Colorado. Increasing the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of existing activities and programs is key, particularly during COVID-19’s unexpected blow to state and local economies. For example, the U.S. Congress stabilized U.S. Forest Service and Department of Interior budgets with the enactment of the Wildfire and Disaster Funding Adjustment in the FY18 Consolidated Appropriations Act. This “fire fix” could protect \$1.3 billion annually that had previously been redirected to pay for firefighting. Federal land management agencies must not miss this critical opportunity to reinvest this \$1.3 billion in programs that increase forest resilience and reduce wildfire risk. Grantees can help ensure that land management agencies are using the best available decision-making tools and policy options to improve strategic planning, access existing capacity, and track resource use.
2. Supporting grantees that explore existing federal and state sources of funding that do not currently fund wildfire resilience efforts but have the potential to be directed towards such efforts. For example, funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program can technically be used to assist states, territories, federally recognized tribes, and local communities for wildfire risk reduction, but are rarely used for this purpose.
3. Supporting grantees that identify new sources of federal, state, local, or private funding—including philanthropic funding—for wildfire resilience. The foundation is supporting grantees that are exploring potential short-term opportunities to secure public funding through economic recovery efforts, and longer-term opportunities to secure additional public funding. At the state and local levels, these opportunities often come after significant wildfire events. Given COVID-19, particular emphasis will be placed in the near term on exploring sources of private funding. For example, the foundation will support grantees exploring innovative funding mechanisms through development of industries that utilize the types of woody materials that come from forest thinning.

Any single funding stream is unlikely to achieve the pace and scale of landscape treatment and community resilience activities necessary to meaningfully reduce wildfire risk, but each step taken to internalize the costs of ignoring, and the benefits of investing in, wildfire risk reduction puts the West closer to closing the gap between current and needed investment in wildfire resilience.

## IV. What success looks like

The goal of this strategy: Communities and lands in California, Washington, Colorado, and Montana are more wildfire resilient.

The foundation will use the following outcomes to assess success:

**Policy advocacy and coalition-building:** New wildfire resilience policy solutions centered on facilitating use of prescribed burns and land use planning tools are adopted. Grantees will achieve policy outcomes through inclusive coalitions that represent a diversity of perspectives, such as forest conservation, public health, climate, water, social justice, labor, and the insurance and building industries.

**Tribal capacity-building and policy impact:** Interested tribes in our four priority states have additional capacity to participate and lead in forest and fire policy and management decisions. Capacity-building may include, but is not limited to, facilitating knowledge-sharing between tribes, strengthening relationships with non-tribal entities that share common goals, and identification of state or federal policy changes that may facilitate tribal use of fire.

**Wildfire resilience funding:** Grantees have successfully secured additional resources for wildfire resilience (as distinct from wildfire suppression/firefighting).

## V. Conclusion

The extreme wildfire events experienced across the globe in recent years demonstrate the consequences of inaction on achieving wildfire resilience—lost lives, damaged property, increased air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, threats to biodiversity and watershed health, long-lasting economic impacts, and more.

Fortunately, the causes of extreme wildfire events are well-understood, and there are many tools already available to proactively improve the wildfire resilience of ecosystems and communities. By investing in diverse coalition-building that leads to policies and practices grounded in place-based solutions and piloted in key states, the western United States can move toward a wildfire-resilient future.

# NOTES

1. All western states would benefit from additional investment in more effective wildfire policy. Given the foundation's limited funding resources, these four stood out in consulting wildfire, conservation, and policy professionals as states with realistic shorter-term opportunities for wildfire resilience policy change, and where lessons could be transferred to other states across the West.
2. The economic costs of extreme wildfire events are enormous, and the cost of lives lost is immeasurable. While investment in wildfire resilience activities also requires significant resources, these dollars will save lives, protect communities, restore forest health, and more by reducing wildfire risk and making communities and lands more resilient.
3. All forest treatment types, including prescribed fire, can result in immediate carbon losses and air quality impacts. However, it is well understood that for many forests, some combination of active management tools is necessary to restore forest health and wildfire resilience, allowing forests to remain carbon sinks over time despite short-term carbon losses. Studies have also shown that wildfire smoke is more detrimental to human health than smoke from prescribed burns.