

## Monitoring forest health

How do public land managers and foresters know when their “prescription” is helping the forest?

Having baseline (starting point) data is important when reintroducing fire and introducing mechanical thinning practices to restore the habitat of forest mosaics. Land managers and foresters must be able to tell what effects restorative treatments have on the area’s ecology. Monitoring the before and after effects of prescribed burn areas is imperative because it helps foresters and managers understand how fire impacts the system. This information dictates future treatments or how to respond to wildfire in certain areas. Having this data also helps land managers prioritize where to direct resources.

You will be looking at pre and post burn photos on prescribed fire monitoring sites in the Oak Creek Wildlife Area near Naches. The pages on both documents are in the site pre and post burn. You will compare how burning has or has not impacted five different locations.

- 1) Look through the “pre” burn photos. In one paragraph, describe what you notice.
  - a. What is similar in the photos?
  - b. Is there anything that stands out?
  - c. Would you consider this a “healthy” forest? Why or why not?
- 2) Look through the “post” burn photos. In one paragraph, describe how the pictures look different from their counterparts.
  - a. Do you think this area looks more resilient to disease, pests, or wildfire? Why or why not?
- 3) These photos were only taken a couple of months apart. Predict what the ecosystem may look like a year later.
- 4) If you were a forester collecting data at this plot, what else might you want to know about how your fire prescription impacted the area?