

Fire Scientists' Statement

Wildfire can both rejuvenate and devastate a landscape; it can be both an ally and an enemy in the development of resilient forests in the Southwest. Wildfire is a natural process that has shaped many ecosystems in this region for centuries. Dry conifer forests of the Southwest burned frequently with low-severity and mild effects. In a warming climate with unnaturally dense stands of young trees from past management practices, high-severity fires can create treeless patches so large that forests are not likely to return, even given many decades or centuries. On the other hand, maintaining a regime of frequent low-severity surface fires can help create forests that have a better chance of surviving droughts and our changing climate. Our forested lands require fire as an active natural management tool. It requires a coordinated effort among scientists, communities, managers and the boots on the ground to insure the proper, safe, and active use of fire.

It was at the nexus of science, management, and community that the *Fires of Change* science-art project was formed. The Landscape Conservation Initiative, the Southwest Fire Science Consortium, and the Flagstaff Arts Council partnered with funding from the Joint Fire Science Program and the National Endowment of the Arts to bring artists, managers, and scientists together for experiential and collaborative learning. These artists met with fire managers and fire ecologists who presented an entire semester's worth of an undergraduate fire ecology course while camping together on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon and touring the recent Slide Fire. We hoped they would be inspired by the natural beauty of the North Rim and through conversations with scientists and managers create specific and thoughtful work that shares a compelling story of the complexity of fire with a broader audience.

~ Collin Haffey, Andi Thode, Barb Satink Wolfson, Cari Kimball