

Wildland Fire in America - a contemporary survey

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“and they shall go out from one fire, and another fire shall devour them.” - Ezekiel 15:7

The project's goal is a historical and geographical survey of wildland fire in America. The original proposal intended two books. One, *Between Two Fires: A Fire History of America, 1960-2012*, would serve as a play-by-play and tell a story of ideas, institutions, and fires. The other, *To the Last Smoke*, would serve as color commentary, assembling an anthology of essays on particular places, topics, people, and events. The project would run from late 2010 to 2014, overseen by Lincoln Bramwell, USFS chief historian. Sponsors included the U.S. Forest Service, Department of the Interior, and JFSP. Updates and essays have been posted on the project website [firehistory.asu.edu]. PDFs of the manuscripts were sent to the sponsors in September, 2014.

Between Two Fires (195,000 words)

Between Two Fires was drafted in August, 2013. I then sent it out to agency sponsors for review. Only one reviewer replied. I rewrote the manuscript to 195,000 words and submitted it to the University of Arizona Press for consideration. FAM (Forest Service) then decided it wanted to sponsor publication, with printed and e-book copies available by October, 2014. Unfortunately, after several delays, the preliminary edits made the scheme impossible. In May I resubmitted the manuscript to the University of Arizona Press for review, which is still on-going. The agencies will buy what copies they need at deep discount (which will be cheaper than paying for publication).

The annotated outline below shows the scope of the text.

Prologue: agency on fire [USFS and American fire community in 1960]

Three fires: 1961

Part 1. Spark (1962-1967)

Last hurrahs: 1967 and 1970

Part 2. Hot line (1968-1979)

New normals: 1977 and 1980

Part 3. Holding (1980-1992)

Lost fire: 1991

Part 4. Slopover (1993-2000)

Millennial fire: 2000

Part 5. Blowup (2001-2007)

East meets west: 2007

Part 6. Burning out (2008-2012)

Wallowing: 2011

Epilogue: After action report

Afterword (personal perspective)

Themes, motifs, lessons

Larger narrative arc (50 year intervals) - resistance, restoration, resilience

Single use and single issue triumphs over multiple use

Fire not separable from larger culture - including politics

Culture trumps science

USFS needs to redefine its role in national system

Prescribed fire not a universal principle; regional characteristics of fire practices

Three strategies at work today in the West

From government monopoly to civil society; from interagency to intergovernmental

If you fail, fail big

To the Last Smoke: A Fire Reconnaissance of America, 2011-2015

The proposed collection of essays broke out of its corral and galloped over the countryside. It has evolved into a suite of regional surveys, beginning with the four main fire regions of the country, plus the Southwest. Each survey will have 55,000-60,000 words. Altogether, they present a reconnaissance of what the American fire scene has looked like during the years of the project.

The University of Arizona Press has agreed to publish the project as a multi-volume work, with up to eight volumes. If a ninth emerges, I will self-publish. The first four volumes have been submitted. The Southwest should be completed by summer, 2015. Because of the contemplated publication, I have had to remove the essays from the project website.

The roster below tabulates the regions completed or contemplated.

- Vol. 1 Florida's Fire Mosaic
- Vol. 2 California's Fire Complex
- Vol. 3 Where the Mountains Roar: the Northern Rockies
- Vol. 4 The Fire in the Center: the Great Plains
Includes a mini-survey of Texas (20,000 words)
- Vol. 5 The Southwest's Cycles of Fire
- Vol. 6 Between the Mountains
Three mini-surveys on the Texas model for Colorado, Utah, and Nevada
- Vol. 7 Here and There
Three mini-surveys for oak woodlands, Pacific Northwest, and Lake States
- Vol. 8 Dark Days: fire in the Northeast
- Vol. 9 Field Notes - assorted essays (fire serious, fire sideways)

For an example of how the essays cohere, see the outline for the Southwest volume, below:

- Prologue: cycles of fire
- Sacred Mountains
 - Jemez Plateau, Mogollon Mountains, Kaibab Plateau, Huachucas
- Sky Islands
 - Chiricahuas, Mt Graham, Mt Trumbull, Tanque Verde
- On the edge, under the rim
 - 4FRI (to be merged with FireScape)
 - Thinking like a burnt mountain (green fire meets red fire)
 - Rising from the ashes (Phoenix)
 - Under the Tonto Rim
 - Buenos Fuegos (Buenos Aires NWR)
 - Squaring the triangle (San Carlos agency)
 - A refusal to mourn the death, by fire, of a crew in Yarnell
- Epilogue: the Southwest between two fires

Money remained in the project account when the original grant expired at the end of September, 2014. We have extended the project another year to pursue more regions, specifically the oak woodlands and the Intermountains. It is likely some funds will still remain, along with some regions. It is unclear how I might proceed further. Academic year (2016-17) is potentially a sabbatical year, which I could devote to mopping up. Or turn to Mexico.