

Andrus conference looks ahead

Event will mark 100 years of the Forest Service

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Some of the country's top forest officials and experts are coming to Boise in November to keep pushing the evolution of forest management in the West.

Changing views on managing forest fires and protecting forest health will be discussed at a forum co-sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service, Boise State University's Andrus Center for Public Policy and The Idaho Statesman.

The Nov. 18-19 conference also will help lead into the Forest Service's 100th birthday by looking ahead at the next 100 years.

"What do we want our forests to look like in 2105?" former Gov. Cecil Andrus, Statesman publisher Leslie Hurst and Regional Forester Jack Troyer ask in the conference invitation.

Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth, one of his predecessors Jack Ward Thomas and fire historian Stephen Pyne will speak, along with a host of other officials and experts, including Idaho Statesman environmental reporter Rocky Barker.

The conference will build on innovations in forest fire philosophy that were hashed out at a Boise conference four years ago but have been implemented at a pace that has been "glacially slow," according to an April paper released by the Andrus Center.

That paper, "A Challenge Still Unmet," focused on the many steps needed to bring forest policy in line with the forest philosophy that everyone seems to agree on.

"If we don't get on with the change in policy, the priceless forests we all love will be lost for generations, and the cost to people and property will continue to be frightful," the paper said.

For most of a century, the government has suppressed these fires, and let the Western forests grow thick and dense. At the same time, more and more people and communities have spread to these forested areas.

In theory, most experts and policy makers agree that regular forest fires play a role in forest health and more effort should be spent on managing the forests to prevent catastrophic and property-damaging fire.

But with about 190 million acres at risk of major wildfire, the Forest Service thinned less than 3 million. The goal for this year was up to 4 million.

"Theodore Roosevelt's vision helped create the U.S. Forest Service at a time when conversation was not a high priority," Andrus said.

"One-hundred years later, we face a whole new set of challenges in our forests, and the question we must address is: Are we up to the challenges in the next century of stewardship?"

To attend

"The Next 100 Years," a conference looking at the future of forest health and forest fires, is being held Nov. 18-19 by the U.S. Forest Service, Boise State University's Andrus Center for Public Policy, and The Idaho Statesman.

Registration is \$50 , and the event will be held at BSU's Student Union.

For more information, call the Andrus Center at 426-4218.