

CONCURRENT SESSION I—Wildland Ecosystem Topics

Fire in Wildland Ecosystems—Opening Comments¹

Tom Nichols²

More than 25 years ago, the pioneering work in fire ecology by Harold Biswell and others encouraged the incorporation of prescribed fire into fire management policies. However, the use in California of prescribed fire in fuels treatment, wilderness management, or ecosystem maintenance programs has not been particularly extensive. Only a fraction of wilderness areas, for example, have a prescribed natural fire program. In forests and brushlands around the State, natural and activity fuels continue to accumulate, and wildfires are becoming increasingly difficult, if not impossible in

some situations, to suppress. Reasons for the gap between land management objectives and results with regard to prescribed fire include lack of interagency planning and communication, internal agency differences in resource management objectives, limitations on funding availability, and estimating the behavior of long-term prescribed fires, particularly those occurring in wilderness areas. Prescribed fire remains an important land management tool. The activity, however, of prescribed fire programs will depend on the solution of many issues that constrain its application. The ideas of the various speakers and the discussion that is stimulated should provide much food for thought.

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²Prescribed Fire Specialist, Western Region, USDI National Park Service, 600 Harrison, Suite 600, San Francisco, CA 94107.

