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The Fire Story: Episode 5 Resource Guide

Episode five introduces issues related to rangeland fire, which differ from fires you are likely to see or experience in densely populated spaces. Rangeland fires can spread quickly because of wind, ample and dry fuel, and burn thousands of acres at a time. Rangeland and human communities are socially expansive and inextricably linked. Rangeland landscapes provides social, cultural, and economic values to communities across the American West. Rangelands are used primarily for agriculture in Eastern Oregon, with an emphasis of livestock, and are both privately and publicly owned. Public rangelands are also used frequently for outdoor recreation and tourism, and also serve as primary habitat for several species of wildlife. Wildfire is a large concern for ranchers, rural communities, and public agencies, who all manage rangeland in different ways. We explore how issues of scale, ownership, and management impact rural communities and ranchers in Oregon.

Terms Outlined in this Episode:

The **invasive grass-fire cycle** increases fire ignition probability, fire size, and frequency. Grasses are "fine fuels" that dry quickly and burn rapidly during wildfires. Non-native species of grass have become a nuisance species because of their positive feedback loop with wildfire, where they lead to hotter and more frequent fires.

The **Bureau of Land Management** **(BLM)** is one of the federal agencies that manages millions of acres of public rangeland in Oregon. The BLM operates under multiple-use and sustained yield mandates, which means the agency manages the land for various uses and values, including livestock grazing, recreation, and wildlife habitat.

Fuel breaks are usually large strips of bare land and serve as one way to mitigate the spread of wildland fire and protect wildland fire fighters. Fuel breaks remove fuels from a designated area, in hopes of slowing a fire.

The greater sage-grouse is a vulnerable bird species that serves as an iconic Indicator species that signals the overall health of sagebrush ecosystems. Rangelands in Oregon serve as a primary habitat for the greater sage-grouse and hundreds of other species. A recent study by the United States Geological Survey showed that **greater sage-grouse populations across the American West have declined by more the 80% since 1965**. Managing fires on rangeland also means managing for the land to serve as a healthy habitat. A good motto for remembering the interconnectedness of species, humans, and the landscape is, **"What's good for the bird, is good for the herd. What's bad for the bird, is bad for the herd."**

Targeted grazing is the use of livestock grazing to achieve specific land management goals, such as fuel reduction. The specific components of targeting grazing include using a specific kind of livestock at a location for a determined season, duration, and intensity.

Rangeland Fire Protection Associations are organized collaborations that bring together ranchers, government agencies, and rural districts. The organizations rely on volunteer crews of ranchers who train and work with government agencies to respond to fires on private and state lands where fire protection has not historically been present. These collaboratives starting emerging in the 1990's and often having mottos of "Neighbors helping neighbors."

Additional Information and Programs Discussed:

- Collaboratives are becoming increasingly important in managing wildfire in rangelands. The Harney County Wildfire Collaborative is one example of a collaborative in Oregon. Formed in 2014, the Harney County Wildfire Collaborative provides a platform for diverse stakeholders to share resources, information, and build trust through mutual and open channels of communication.
- Wildfire is a collective action issue that requires collaboration across multiple scales with multiple partners. The multi-ownership nature of property in the American West poses particular challenges for management and mitigation. Agencies, managers, and citizens across western landscapes have been exploring models for collective action to proactively manage landscapes and reduce wildfire risk.
- Oregon State University FNR Extension Fire Program: The Fire Program assists in identifying landscapes in highest need of strategic focus of resources to reduce wildfire and landscape health risks at a statewide scale. Extension faculty and staff also provide outreach and education related to wildfire and assist with project implementation on the ground.
- Northwest Fire Science Consortium: The NWFSC disseminates fire science information, tools, and expertise, and builds connections between organizations to support related outreach and education efforts. This group is a multi-disciplinary network of federal and state agencies, NGOs, universities, and private landowners in Washington and Oregon.
- The Oregon Cattleman's Association was formed in 1913 and promotes environmentally and socially sound cattle industry practices alongside a positive and contemporary image of the industry. It also works to improve and strengthen the industry's economics, assure a strong political presence in related areas, and protect industry communities and private property rights.

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The Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics encourages civic engagement and inspires enlightened dialogue by bringing students, scholars, activists, policymakers, and communities together to discuss issues affecting Oregon, our nation, and the world.

The Northwest Fire Science Consortium is a regional fire science delivery system for disseminating knowledge and tools; a framework for coordinating fire science delivery; and a venue for increasing researcher understanding of the needs of managers & practitioners.

The Institute for a Sustainable Environment is a center for innovative, interdisciplinary research at the nexus of ecological, economic, and social sustainability.

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