

“traditional” practices, to more ecosystem-based concepts, will appreciate this book. The author uses examples and ideas in such a way that the goal of the book: “to help readers understand the impacts of deliberate human activities on forests and to effect changes that are capable of providing benefits without damaging ecosystems” is repeatedly emphasized. Upon completing this book, a reader cannot help but step back from a previous mindset and rethink what forests are, how we can sustain them, and how we should consider the future of our forests. In general, this book will make people think harder about what kind of impact they want to have on our forestlands.—*Jesse Steele*, Washington State University, Pullman, WA.

**Tending Fire: Coping with America’s Wildland Fires.** By Stephen J. Pyne. 2004. Washington, DC: Island Press. 256 p. US \$25.00, hardbound. ISBN 1-55963-565-7.

In his book, *Tending Fire: Coping with America’s Wildland Fires*, Stephen J. Pyne discusses the wildland fire problem in America. Pyne is a 15-year veteran of fighting fires on the rim of the Grand Canyon and is currently a professor in the School of Life Sciences at Arizona State University. The author brings his background in life sciences to his analysis of fire’s role in society and does so in a broader context than many other books dealing with wildland fire.

The book begins by examining fire’s role in history from the beginning of human history through the present. Much of the burning occurring today is in the form of “industrial burning,” where flame is often contained in an internal combustion engine or power plant. In much of the world, fire has changed from primarily the burning of biomass to the burning of fossil fuels.

Fire management in the United States includes that used by Native Americans to manipulate the landscape to provide what people need to attempts at excluding fire from land to keep it from destroying trees. The latter practices have led to unhealthy forests and to the large and destructive wildfires that have been occurring in recent years. A history of fire policy by land management agencies, especially the US Forest Service, is presented, along with events in US history that have made it possible to make decisions and policy dealing with fire on public lands.

Chapter 2 outlines 4 possible choices about what to do when faced with a wildland fire: let it burn, suppress it, prescribe a burn, and change fuel combustibility. Each of these options has been used during the history of fire control in the United States with varying degrees of success and sometimes with negative consequences. Suppression, and the official policy of working to contain a fire by 1000 hours on the day after it is spotted, have led to the forest conditions that we have today. These conditions have gradually led to the policy of changing combustibility to try to remove or rearrange fuels to prevent catastrophic wildfires.

The state of fire research and policy, and the public’s perception of them, is discussed in chapter 3. In recent years, the United States had fallen behind many of the other nations faced with similar fire problems, including Canada and Russia. Now, in this country, we are beginning to bolster our research and reorganization efforts, whereas others are cutting back. Public awareness of what is occurring within the fire community owes much to Norman MacLean’s book, *Young Men and Fire* (1992).

Possibilities for the future direction of fire policy in the United States and strategies that seem to be working, such as better collaboration among private and governmental groups, are considered in chapter 4. The fire environment of concern, now, is at the interface of urban areas and natural landscapes. Such areas are difficult to protect because managers are often faced with accommodating many property owners and the many constituents that have stakes in public lands.

Comparisons between fire control efforts and military operations are often made in books dealing with wildland fires. Pyne states early that he does not think such metaphors are appropriate or valid, but many times throughout the book he makes the same kinds of comparisons and uses the same kinds of metaphors.

For some readers, Stephen Pyne’s writing style and vocabulary may make *Tending Fire* more difficult than necessary to read. The writing style actually varies throughout the book, with some sections easily read and others requiring more effort. The reader can become lost in his long, compound sentences, requiring that some parts be reread to understand his point. I found Pyne’s book challenging to read.

Overall, *Tending Fire* is informative, and it brings to light ideas and perspectives dealing with wildland fires that I had not previously considered or encountered. Its good insights into fire are rewarding enough to outweigh the arduous reading.—*Andy Eldred*, Washington State University, Pullman, WA.