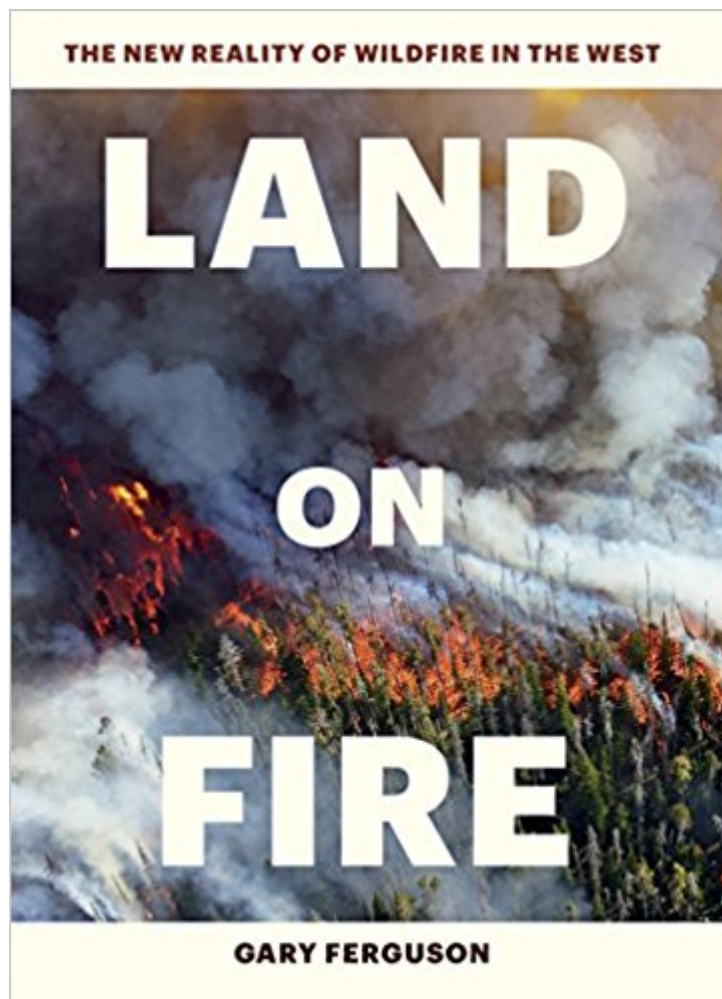




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# Land On Fire: The New Reality Of Wildfire In The West



## Synopsis

“This comprehensive book offers a fascinating overview of how those fires are fought, and some conversation-starters for how we might reimagine our relationship with the woods.” —Bill McKibben, author of *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet* “Wildfire season is burning longer and hotter, affecting more and more people, especially in the west. *Land on Fire* explores the fascinating science behind this phenomenon and the ongoing research to find a solution. This gripping narrative details how years of fire suppression and chronic drought have combined to make the situation so dire.” Award-winning nature writer Gary Ferguson brings to life the extraordinary efforts of those responsible for fighting wildfires, and deftly explains how nature reacts in the aftermath of flames. Dramatic photographs reveal the terror and beauty of fire, as well as the staggering effect it has on the landscape.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“The massive fire seasons of recent years make it clear we need to think hard about the future of our forests. This compact but comprehensive book offers some conversation starters for how we might reimagine our relationship with the woods.” —Bill McKibben, author of *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet* “For readers seeking a nuanced understanding of America’s increasingly extreme wildfire problem, this is a superb overview. It’s just the sort of book I wish someone had handed me when I became a fire lookout fifteen years ago. I learned much from it. You will too.” —Philip Connors, author of *Fire Season: Field Notes from a Wilderness Lookout* “*Land on Fire* provides a complete view of what it is like to deal with the extreme nature of

wildfires out of control, and what the future may bring. • "Bob Fry, Type 2 Incident Commander, Northern Rockies • Ferguson provides an incisive rendering of fire ecology, the social impacts of wildfire, and an inside view of the state-of-the-art science and technology behind today's heroic firefighting efforts. • "Dr. Cristina Eisenberg, chief scientist at Earthwatch Institute and author of *The Carnivore Way: Coexisting with and Conserving North America's Predators* • A stark portrait. • "NYBG's Plant Talk • A terrific book that all designers—but particularly those who live in the West—should study as we re-imagine our relationship with forests and western landscapes. • "Garden Design Online • Land on Fire invites us to expand our own awareness about the lessons we, individually and culturally, could learn from the many functions of fire. • "Cultivating Place • Comprehensive. . . . highly readable. • "The Denver Post • Land on Fire is a book that is necessary reading for anyone who wants to be a thoughtful, informed and responsible citizen of the West. • "The Missoulian

• The massive fire seasons of recent years make it clear we need to think hard about the future of our forests. This comprehensive book offers some conversation starters for how we might reimagine our relationship with the woods. • "BILL MCKIBBEN, author of *Earth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet* • For readers seeking a nuanced understanding of America's increasingly extreme wildfire problem, this is a superb overview. It's just the sort of book I wish someone had handed me when I became a fire lookout fifteen years ago. I learned much from it. You will too. • "PHILIP CONNORS, author of *Fire Season: Field Notes from a Wilderness Lookout* • Land on Fire provides a complete view of what it is like to deal with the extreme nature of wildfires out of control, and what the future may bring. • "BOB FRY, Type 2 Incident Commander, Northern Rockies • Ferguson provides an incisive rendering of fire ecology, the social impacts of wildfire, and an inside view of the state-of-the-art science and technology behind today's heroic firefighting efforts. • "DR. CRISTINA EISENBERG, chief scientist, Earthwatch Institute; author of *The Carnivore Way: Coexisting with and Conserving North America's Predators*

• The why behind wildfire The wildfires of 2015 were the most devastating on record; more than 9 million acres burned across North America and the United States spent more than 2 billion dollars fighting and suppressing the fires. 2016 is expected to be even worse: by May, more than 1.6 million acres had already burned. Wildfire season is burning longer and hotter, affecting more and more people, especially in the west. • More academic than entertaining, this is a valuable

asset for firefighters as well as those interested in wildland fire. If you live in the woods or anywhere near them, I highly recommend you read this. Not necessarily to understand fires, but to see what exactly is involved. Living out in the country myself, I'm grateful that I chose to read this book. Very informative. Easy to understand. If you know nothing about the science of fires, you will learn a great deal after reading this book. This is a book for anyone that wants to obtain a deeper understanding of fires. It explores the science behind fires and the research being done to find a solution. You'll learn about the heroic efforts of those responsible for fighting fire, how years of fire suppression and chronic drought have combined to make the situation more dire, and how nature reacts in the aftermath of flames. Color photographs throughout reveal the beauty and terror of fire and the stunning effect it has on the landscape. Land on Fire is for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of our time of fire. It is obvious to me that a great deal of research and work went into this book!Disclaimer: Thanks NetGalley for the opportunity to read and review it!

As a retired firefighter with over thirty years of trying to help solve the perplexing problem of wild fire and its impacts, I was impressed with Gary Ferguson's in-depth study, *Land on Fire*, and particularly with its conclusion; the landscape is turbulent and fire behavior is not likely to change anytime soon. My futile efforts seem universal, not necessarily a byproduct of my ineptitude. Ferguson presents the dilemma with spot-on and clear analysis. The complications involved with the intricate science of burning, the unpredictability of the weather, global warming, increasing deterioration of the forest structure, and lack of funding for research and suppression all contribute to a problem that defies resolution. Using historical data and anecdotes, accompanied by stunning photographs depicting the fury of wild fires across the country, the author presents a masterful description of where firefighting has travelled, what complexities affect suppression efforts, insight into successes and failures, and prospects for the future. I found the information very informative, even after twenty-four years of retirement, because I have witnessed a recent increase in the number and size of fires, caused by the shrinking of the wildland urban interface areas and the other factors noted. It's disturbing and the answers are very elusive. This book is a great source of information for those who care about the problem, and even for those who are only vaguely concerned, because it sheds light on a growing menace that threatens all of us and warns of the uncertainty of solving it in a timely fashion. It reinforces the need for public insistence on leaders who recognize the need to face the challenges posed by human contribution to climate change and its footprint on the earth where we live. There must be leaders, as the author asserts, that have the wisdom and courage to neither deny the challenges nor shrink in the face of

Ferguson writes extremely well and makes his subject both accessible and easy to understand in terms of cause and effect. His photographs are stunning in themselves, and aid understanding. He explains, for instance, how foresters in the past took stances that encouraged the build-up of brush until massive fires could not be stopped and only a few major trees with thick bark remained. The forests in general would benefit from occasional smaller fires burning off old deadwood and litter, making it into nutrients and allowing seeds to sprout in clearings. But the North American continent is drying and warming. He shows that the extended fire season and continued over-abstraction of freshwater have combined to guarantee stands of dying trees and massive fires blazing for months. Lightning and human activity, including downed power lines, are the main causes of fires. We also learn about Standing Firefighting Orders, and forensic fire science. That means tracing how a fire started, what caused it to spread and what fanned or enabled it. Ladder trees, jumping crown fires, flying sparks and valleys all play a part. We learn how to protect a house against such fires well in advance. I'm really glad that the experts in this extraordinary field are able to publish their knowledge so we can all benefit. Not least, all the people we meet in the course of this book, employed partly because of fires; the meteorologist, the heli pilot, the computer data modeller, the equipment manufacturers and medics, and of course the brave guys and girls out there in rough country with a radio and a Pulaski tool. If you enjoyed this book, or want to see more awesome photos (I use the term seldom) you will also like: *The Year Yellowstone Burned: A Twenty-Five-Year Perspective* by Jeff Henry. I downloaded an ARC from Net Galley. This is an unbiased review.

With every wildfire season, the headlines are dramatic: acres consumed, houses threatened, firefighters valiantly working, ecosystems adjusting. But what's the deeper story, the science behind it all? That's what this book explores: what causes fires, how a fire-line works, methods of prevention, effects of climate change, and more. Ferguson is an engaging guide, knowledgeable and easygoing. I learned a great deal.

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