

Protecting Idaho's Forests

Idaho's forests are a blessing to our state. Over 40% of Idaho is forested, and those forests give us clean water, timber, recreation, and many economic and environmental benefits. Another great thing about forests is that they are renewable and clean; we can continue to harvest trees, and as long as we are careful, we won't run out. However, today, our forests face many challenges; wildfires, disease, and invasive species are all hurdles to overcome. We have to raise awareness and take action now to continue to benefit from this resource we are so lucky to have.

Natural and controlled fires are essential to the health of forests; they seem destructive on the cover, but there's more to the story. Wildfires clear dead debris, prevent disease, return nutrients to the soil, and even help seeds germinate and grow. Some trees are fire-dependent, having evolved over thousands of years to use fire to spread and grow. Despite these benefits, fires were put out immediately in the past century, allowing the understory to grow, which makes fires spread faster, making fires more destructive and doing more harm than good. Controlled wildfires to clear debris will be able to prevent a catastrophic fire.

Insects and disease are also threats, impacting around 50 million acres, or 15% of our forests. Insects like the tussock moth have damaged much of our forests, while bark beetles burrow in the bark and cut off the spread of water and nutrients, killing the trees. Diseases are

also a threat; the dwarf mistletoe grows in clumps and steals nutrients from the tree, while Armillaria root rot is one of the most common and destructive diseases attacking the root systems of trees and is usually unseen. Numerous forests are impacted by insects and disease, reforestation, however, can fight this problem. Planting healthy forests will combat this problem. This is because healthy forests are better able to withstand and recover from attacks.

As long as we're careful and aware we can continue to benefit from our forests. This means creating solutions for specific problems and raising awareness to protect our forests.

Works Cited

Welcome to Idaho Forests: Idaho forests. org, <https://www.idahoforests.org/forest-information/>. 22

September 2022

After the Burn: Idaho Firewise .org, <https://idahofirewise.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/uXofXiXafterXtheXburn.pdf>. 10 October 2022

Fire Ecology: blm. gov, https://www.blm.gov/or/resources/recreation/ablerock/files/fire_ecol_intro.pdf.

11 October 2022