

Idaho forests are a beloved treasure of the gem state, where people come from all over the world to visit. From hosting the Special Olympics, to providing the National Christmas tree for the nation's capital, Idaho forests have been a blessing to people worldwide. However, Idaho forests face many challenges. I will talk about these challenges, possible solutions, and future forest management practices.

Wildfires are one of the biggest threats to Idaho forests. It can take decades to fully recover from a wildfire. Fires are usually caused by thunder storms or people. For example, a chain dragging on the ground and causing sparks, a cigarette discarded out a car window, an unattended campfire, etc. The best way to manage our forests is with prescribed burns and selective logging. Selective logging is when trees are strategically harvested to reduce their population. Selective logging contracts can bring revenue, while thinning forest growth at the same time. Prescribed burns are when a controlled fire is set to burn off dry weeds, leaves, and other organic matter. When compared to the raging, uncontrollable fires we have been experiencing over the last decade, these methods of forest management will produce a mere fraction of the smoke and pollution that goes up into the atmosphere. This will help fight climate change.

Droughts and insects are other challenges that Idaho forests face. Like fires, selective logging and prescribed burns can help with both of these problems. Thinning trees and removing overgrowth conserves water required by forests and reduces the chance of parasites and bug infestations that can kill entire mountainsides.

Idaho's forests are amazing places that provide us with so many fun things to do. The problems they face can be helped significantly with selective logging and prescribed burns. Everyone can help Idaho forests by supporting the organizations that care for them, and being responsible stewards of the land themselves. By embracing sustainable forest management practices, we can all enjoy Idaho forests for generations to come.