

Wildlife & Water Post-Fire



Questions in the Aftermath of Wildfire

How will the vegetation recover?

What will the wildlife do?

Is there the risk of a reburn or post-fire flooding?

What can be done to assist the land as it recovers?

What does recovery even look like?

Wildfire effects on the landscape depends on many factors. The impacts aren't uniform; some areas burn severely, others less so, and some remain untouched.

This variability complicates recovery planning, especially for wetlands and other vital habitats. Understanding fire's potential impacts, the next steps in recovery, and available resources can aid in a smoother and more efficient recovery.

Impacts on Habitat and Water Quality

Soil and Flooding: Burned soil becomes hydrophobic, causing rainwater and snowmelt to quickly run off, leading to lasting flooding and debris flows after fires.

Vegetation Loss: The absence of riparian plants post-fire affects stream health. Severe fires can cause higher water temperatures, increased erosion, and sediment flow, negatively impacting aquatic life and agricultural infrastructure.

Altered Landscapes: Declines in plant diversity and loss of vegetation alters wildlife habitats; familiar animals may leave while new ones move in as they adapt to the transformed environment.

Next Steps to Recovery

DO

- WAIT AND SEE, many plants are adapted to resprout after fire
- Be aware of your surrounding and watch for potential flood risks and debris flows
- Contact local agencies for advice on recovery
- Schedule a free post-fire risk assessment with the Okanogan Conservation District

DON'T

- Reseed with invasive and non-native grasses or plants
- Use heavy equipment on fragile soils
- Destabilize soil by removing trees near stream banks
- Add straw to recovering soils; it can prevent plants from growing back

Contact Us

The Okanogan Conservation District offers programs and services free of charge to address natural resource concerns.

Contact us for a site visit, planting recommendations, or for post-fire assistance. Visit our website to learn about our programs and services, resources, plant vendor lists, and more.

www.okanogand.org | 509-422-0855

“I’ve learned to try to live in each successive moment and observe all that is happening around me; to be transformed by each small or large change experienced.

I used to ask myself, ‘How will I continue if these woods and house burn?’

Now I know.”

- Gert Webster

Gert Webster experienced impacts from the 2014 Carlton Complex fire first-hand and worked with the Okanogan Conservation District as well as other local organizations to navigate recovery on the landscape.

2014



Impacts on Chiliwist Creek from the Carlton Complex fire.

2020



Regrowth of vegetation through the “wait and see” approach.



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