

Logging may increase fire risk

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Researchers say logging after forest fires may hinder forest regeneration and increase fire risk.

A new study done in the area burned in the catastrophic Biscuit Fire in southwestern Oregon in 2002 found that allowing trees to regenerate naturally works about as well as -- or better than -- logging and replanting, and that undisturbed areas may be at lower fire risk in the future.

The research, which will be published Friday in Scienceexpress and later presented in the journal Science, was conducted by Oregon State University and the Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry in Hawaii.

The study suggested that logging, by itself, would actually increase the levels of material that could fuel another fire in the near future, because of the easily-burned materials left behind on the forest floor after trees are felled and processed.

"Surprisingly, it appears that after even the most severe fires, the forest is naturally very resilient, more than it's often given credit for," said lead author Dan Donato, a graduate student in the Department of Forest Science.

When left to natural regeneration, the trees that did not die acted as a seed source for fairly wide areas around them, researchers said.

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