

JFSP Project Highlights

Research Supporting Sound Decisions



The JFSP, a partnership of six federal wildland fire and research organizations, provides scientific information and support for fuel and fire management programs.

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What are the Consequences of Increased Biomass Removal?



Large-scale biomass removal programs to lower wildfire risks and associated damages on public and private lands may have short-term and long-term economic impacts on local, regional, and national forest product markets. These kinds of market, timber growing, and land use economic effects should be a central part of any economic analysis of the trade-offs of using alternative fuel treatments to reduce fire risk.

Researchers evaluated the economic consequences of introducing biomass removals into wood products markets and they found the following:

- Mill owners (wood consumers) financially gain, while non-federal timber owners (wood producers) lose, with amounts dependent on the size of the program. Interregional trade between the South and West was limited, but both regions would significantly alter their timber trade with other parts of the U.S., Canada, and the rest of the world.
- Requiring treatment of the wildland urban


interface first leads to higher costs per acre and hence less area treated per year given a fixed national budget for treatments. Requiring even funding by state leads to higher costs and lower revenues per acre, as higher cost treatable acres are substituted for lower cost treatable in other states.

- Treatments designed to achieve goals for fire risk may be too extreme (stands would require drastic thinning) for widespread application. Many treated stands will revert to high-risk status within 10-20 years.
- If treatments are expected to supplement existing federal timber harvests in a meaningful way, an increase in both administrative funding (government) and in the supply of treaters (private) may be needed.
- Comparison of light treatments to more aggressive even-aged thin-from-below treatments reveals a trade-off between sawlog volume removed and risk reduction.
- Current mechanical treatment rates on federal lands are unlikely to result in completion of fire risk reduction goals within a reasonable planning range (e.g., within a few decades), unless treatments are limited to higher risk stands in the wildland urban interface.

These results are in press and will be available in the near future. We wanted to give you a first look at the findings.

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