

Dry Type Forests

A healthy forest is a key contributor to a highly functioning watershed. Forest landscapes across the Great Basin are suffering from unhealthy management, which increases risk of disease, dense canopy cover, over-crowding and catastrophic fire. Ultimately, precipitation captured in the top of the watershed affects the health of everything within it. Dry-type forest habitat is composed of numerous tree species, including ponderosa pine, western juniper, white fir, and lodge pole pine. Historically, these forests experienced more frequent low-intensity fires that would burn off the understory and small trees on a 7-15 year cycle, resulting in a diverse and robust mosaic of older, larger aforementioned tree species mixed with areas of younger trees, stands, and forests. Fire suppression practices in the past century have elevated 'fuel levels' to a degree that has altered forest species composition and succession, and susceptibility to uncharacteristic large wildfires due to the fuel loads. In addition to the building of fuel levels, the change in forest management practices during the last century has reduced diversity of species and age structures, and increased densities of trees within this forest type.

Lake County's forested landscape is unique due to the extensive stands of old legacy ponderosa pine mixed with aspen, open meadows and streams. Greater sage grouse, wood pecker, antelope, and mule deer habitat are also immersed in the project area. The landscape is at severe risk of intense wildlife disturbance due to heavy fuel loading and stand densities which could result in the loss of old legacy ponderosa pine and greater sage grouse focal habitat. In addition, intense wildfire poses a significant risk to local streams through sedimentation and habitat fragmentation impacting endemic Warner sucker and redband trout habitat.

Lake County Umbrella Watershed Council is currently addressing forest health issues with treatments that will improve overall watershed function. Large landscapes across ownership boundaries are being addressed. This process is a ridge top to ridge top restoration treatment.



DRY FOREST BEFORE TREATMENT

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