Coming to grips with the “wildfire problem” and human communities: A perspective based on 25 years of fieldwork in the Wildland Urban Interface

Dr. Matt Carroll, School of the Environment, WSU

Nov 18, 2020 | 3:10 pm | Register for connection info at: https://wsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcqd-mgqz4rGdZh1MKW30M3paCQuV_YMII2

This talk will trace some of the history of how wildfire has been seen and addressed as a policy matter in the US since 1910. We will then turn attention to how applied social scientists have contributed to an understanding of societal response to the risk and reality of seemingly ever-increasing numbers of major wildfire events. We will focus in particular on the development of the concept of fire adapted human communities as fire experts came to the realization that fire suppression alone was not “solving” the problem. We talk about how two social science paradigms have been brought to bear on understanding how human communities can become more fire adapted and how these approaches are making progress in understanding the social complexities involved in such an undertaking.

This is the first in a series of two presentations. This first talk will lay out the history of the evolution of social science thinking on this topic. The second by Travis Paveligo the from the University of Idaho (12/2/2020) will pick up on this history but go into greater detail on current empirical research on how and why different pathways are needed for different human communities in the WUI to achieve greater adaptability.

Dr. Carroll is a Professor in WSU’s School of the Environment. His research interests focus on understanding social issues surrounding controlled and uncontrolled wild-land fire.