

# Are All Fires Bad?

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Happy 75th Birthday Smokey Bear! Since 1944 you have worked hard to inspire people in America to help prevent unwanted wildfires. This is important because Americans need to be educated on the differences between fire that can help the environment and fire that can destroy the environment. In 2001 your catchphrase was updated to "Only You Can Prevent Wildfires". The reason it was updated was so that Americans understand that you are promoting the prevention of unwanted wildfires versus prescribed fires. According to you, "fire plays a vital role in maintaining certain ecosystems".

Certain fires, such as prescribed fires, can help to benefit the environment. A prescribed fire is a controlled fire that is applied by experts. These types of fires are only applied during certain weather conditions to help restore health to ecosystems that benefit from fire. A prescribed fire is still a fire, that is why experts must be extremely meticulous when planning and executing the controlled burn. When applying the controlled burn weather conditions must be right as well as the physical features of the land. Prescribed fires rely on all of these components to be able to be correctly applied.

Wildfires have grown stronger and more destructive in recent years. There were more than 58,000 wildfires in 2018. Prescribed burning helps to manage the brush and excessive plant growth that often causes the spread of these unwanted wildfires. Many Americans believe that all fires are bad and destructive, when in fact, the lack of planned burning can endanger a habitat because it has become overgrown and lost its "prairie like vegetation". Prescribed fire can help new vegetation to grow and help maintain the plants and animals whose habitats rely on periodic fire.

Smokey Bear's message is as important today as it was in 1944. He wants Americans to understand that not all fire is bad for the environment. Prescribed burning helps to maintain brush and growth in an ecosystem so

Wildlife is able to thrive in a healthy habitat. The removal of overgrowth also helps to limit the spread of an unwanted wildfire. Unwanted wildfires can often negatively affect an ecosystem so it's important to limit them the best we can. Thank you Smokey Bear for teaching us all how to protect our forest environments.