



# ISSRM 2011 Madison Conference

Integrating Conservation and Sustainable Living

## Examining the Decision-Making Environment of Fire Managers in the Great Lakes Region

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Presented in:

Wildfire and Management

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This session has been flagged to be relevant to managers by the author.

Human use of forested areas across America has caused a major divergence from historical fire regimes over the last century. The emergent structural and compositional changes in the mixed-pine forests of the Great Lakes states (MI, WI, MN) have led to an increased risk of major wildfire events in the region. As human populations further converge on the fire-dependent forest ecosystems in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, management decision-making becomes more important for both social and ecological reasons. Fire managers in this region are faced with multiple objectives including ecological restoration, wildlife concerns, commodity production, and provision of recreation opportunities. In some cases these objectives may be complementary, while in others they may involve difficult tradeoffs. Fuel managers must balance these competing demands as they seek to build their management programs. A lack of research examining the decision-making environment of managers in the region necessitates greater focus on how they are refining fire and fuel reduction programs to meet multiple objectives. This presentation reports results from a study designed to examine the decision-making context of fire managers in the Great Lakes region. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and a web-based survey of land managers. Participants included representatives from federal (US Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs), state (MI, WI, and MN Departments of Natural Resources), as well as tribal and non-governmental organizations. Findings provide information about the 1) methods currently used to achieve forest restoration and/or fuel reduction objectives, 2) factors that influence decisions regarding the adoption of these different methods, and 3) currently available and preferred methods of information exchange and decision support within the Great Lakes region. Results will assess challenges in effective communication of fire science to decision-makers and discuss implications for the creation of decision support systems for management practitioners.

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