

PAE Sketch Sample 2

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Writ 101, 11

PAE Sketch

February 13, 2013

Are Wildfires Actually Good for the Environment?

The idea of doing this paper on wildfires started when we did the fast lists of all the places beside home that we go to. The first place I put down was Holter Lake. Then when I had to think about sustainability I knew I wanted to do something about the environment. This is when the idea of wildfires popped into my head. Holter Lake holds such a big place in my heart because it is my second home that I have gone too since I was born. There is a famous fire that took place in Mann Gulch in the Gates of the Mountains and caused casualties to men fighting the fire. There is also a major one that I witnessed a few summers ago that really affected me because I got very close to losing my favorite place in the world.

I have always heard that wildfires can actually be good for the environment, but I wasn't sure if that was true and if it was how was it good? Through my research so far I have found that fires can do more good than harm. There are also a majority of reasons to back up the theory of positive effects. This concept however, has not always been considered true. Jenny Jedeikin stated that "Up until a fire in Yellowstone National Park in 1998, it was believed that fire was harmful to the environment and could potentially cause deforestation" (Jedeikin, 1). So I was really surprised that it was just recently that wildfires were considered "healthy" for the environment. One quote that I found from this article sums up this concept perfectly: "By trying to protect ecosystems from fire, we've actually ended up endangering them." (Jedeikin, 1).

One thing that I was very shocked to learn was that on average in the United States there are more than 100,000 forest fires that consume up to 5 million acres of land each year, according to *National Geographic* (“Wildfires”). This is an astounding number, and I had no idea that it was so much. I am starting to think that we should have 5 seasons instead of 4: fall, winter, spring, summer, and fire season.

One last thing that I have learned so far is that controlled burns are very helpful for the environment and a technique that is used often all around the world. On my many trips between Missoula and Great Falls I have noticed that there are smoke clouds in the distance but not too far from the road. Then down a little farther there is another one and sometimes there more than that not even a mile apart. At first I was always a little confused especially because there has usually been snow around so it’s not the wildfire type of weather. I have now learned that these are controlled fires that farmers and land owners do to help get rid of weeds and fertilize the soil. In an article from the United States Army website, Sgt. Austan R. Owen states that this technique is also commonly used as a way to prevent wildfires (Owen, 1). It’s weird to think that you can actually fight fire with fire!

Works Cited

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