



Year of the Fires: The Story of the Great Fires of 1910

Stephen, Pyne

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In the summer of 1910, Northern Rockies wildfires scorched millions of acres in the West, darkened skies in New England, and deposited soot on the ice of Greenland. The flames ravaged pristine wilderness along with farms, towns, and mining camps, culminating in the deaths of seventy-eight firefighters in the Big Blowup along the Montana-Idaho border. The blazes also illuminated a national debate raging about fire policy. Year of the Fires is the fascinating story of that catastrophic year and its pivotal role in establishing how we deal with forest fire in this country. Everything from the tools firefighters carry to strategies of land management was shaped by the fires of 1910.

Stephen Pyne not only explains how the fires occurred, how they were fought, and who fought them, but also puts the event in the context of America's changing attitudes about forests and fires. In 1910 steam-powered trains were spewing sparks across the West while homesteaders were burning their way into the woods to create farms and settlements. Teddy Roosevelt had just doubled the size of the forest reserves, and the idea that timber is finite was just entering American consciousness. The Forest Service, only five years old, was struggling to solidify its role. And even as the country's first foresters were facing the question of how to protect the new public lands, the West exploded in fire. Pyne brings that astonishing year to life in a riveting narrative of the fires, the people, and the decisions that continue to affect American life.

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