

"Climate changes over the last few centuries have been accompanied by changes in the fire regime," according to James S. Clark, now at the New York State Museum in Albany. His research, reported in the July 21, 1988 issue of *Nature*, aimed at establishing the general relationship between fire and climate, was conducted at Itasca State Park in Minnesota. There, he measured the amount of charcoal in lake bottom sediments, where annual sediment layers made it possible to trace fires to individual years and to identify cycles in fire history.

Clark found the forest in the study area burned roughly once every nine years during the relatively warm, dry 15th and 16th centuries. The next three centuries constituted what is known as "The Little Ice Age," and blazes then occurred less intensely about every 14 years.

R. Monastersky, commenting on the Clark research in the July 23, 1988 *Science News*, cites the "greenhouse" warming trend that may currently be starting and suggests that in the light of what seems to be happening in that regard, "fires will presumably become more frequent in the future."

Clark warned that continued fire suppression, coupled with further climate warming, could result in fuel buildup that would give more intense and probably more frequent fires. He mentions the NPS policy of controlled burns as a counteractive measure to this threat.