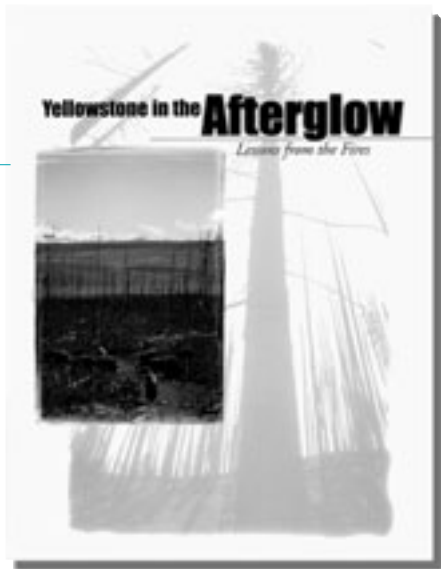


Lessons from the Yellowstone fires of 1988

In spring 2001, as the snow melted off the millions of acres of Western forest and grassland that had been hit by the previous summer's record-breaking fire season, land managers began looking for signs of ecological change. They could find some clues about what

to expect from the newly released *Yellowstone in the Afterglow: Lessons from the Fires* (Franke, M. F. 2000. National Park Service, Mammoth Hot Springs, Wyoming. YCR-NR-2000-03). Yellowstone National Park produced the 118-page book to summarize the



results of several-hundred research projects that have been conducted since 1.4 million acres burned in the greater Yellowstone area in 1988. Many dire predictions were made that summer about the park's future—that wildlife would be reduced, that the forests would have to be replanted, that increased erosion would cause flooding downstream of the park, that visitation would decline. Instead, the research conducted in a variety of disciplines by dozens of scientists from academia and government have largely documented the resilience of the Yellowstone ecosystem in response to large fires.

The moose population on Yellowstone's Northern Range appears to have declined in part because of the loss of old-growth forest, and aspen seedlings are growing in burned areas where aspen had not previously existed, but these are the exceptions. For the most part, the fires of 1988 did not affect the abundance, distribution, or diversity of the park's plant and animal communities. In addition to demonstrating how such conclusions were arrived at, *Yellowstone in the Afterglow* explains the history of the park's controversial fire management policy and how public perceptions of the park and of wildland fire have changed over the years. The book is available in PDF format on the park's website at www.nps.gov/yell/publications/pdfs/fire/afterglow.htm.