



ARTICLE • FIRE AT POINT REYES: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Memories of Vision

[Point Reyes National Seashore \(https://www.nps.gov/pore/\)](https://www.nps.gov/pore/)

By Science Communication Intern Jeremiah Oetting, Point Reyes National Seashore Association



Left image

The 1995 Vision Fire scorched more than 12,000 acres, affecting not just the seashore's flora and fauna, but also the private lands of nearby residents. Dozens of homes and other structures were destroyed.

Credit: NPS



Right image

The Woodward Fire was different. It burned more moderately, unevenly, and was contained at less than half of its predecessor's size.

Credit: NPS

October 2020 - In October 1995, an illegal campfire in Point Reyes National Seashore ignited the largest wildfire to hit the area in sixty years. The Vision Fire, as it came to be known, scorched more than 12,000 acres, affecting not just the seashore's flora and fauna, but also the private lands of nearby residents. Dozens of homes and other structures were destroyed. Memories of Vision have haunted Point Reyes ever since, especially as catastrophic wildfires have reached unprecedented levels elsewhere in California and across the Western U.S.

This August, only a couple of months shy of Vision's 25th anniversary, a rare lightning storm sparked a new blaze that threatened Point Reyes and its neighbors, rekindling fears of a devastating fire in the area. But the Woodward Fire was different. It burned more moderately, unevenly, and was contained at less than half of its predecessor's size.

Fire's long-term benefits are often overshadowed by the unnerving sight of a scorched landscape. With huge wildfires threatening so many communities across the West, it can be hard to appreciate that fire is an essential force responsible for maintaining fire-adapted ecosystems like Point Reyes. But in the decades since Vision, scientists have been studying that complex relationship, taking advantage of the natural laboratory that Point Reyes provides. As the Woodward Fire wanes, these scientists are gearing up to build on insights from the Vision Fire, and contribute to a deeper understanding of the role fire plays in the park.

In this series, we'll dive into the past, present and future of fire in Point Reyes, by examining its impact on the seashore's plants, animals and fungi. We'll hear from scientists about how climate change, fire suppression, drought, and other human influences have changed the dynamics of wildfire in the West. And we'll explore what the recovering seashore will look like in the coming months and years — how trails are being rebuilt, and how NPS staff are managing the land to discourage catastrophic wildfires in the future.

What will emerge is a deeper and more nuanced story of fire told by the experts who study it — not just at Point Reyes, but across the West. [Sign up for the newsletter](#)

(mailto:SFANIM_SciComm@nps.gov&subject=Newsletter%20Signup) to stay in the loop.

[See more from the Bay Area Nature & Science Blog](#) (<https://www.nps.gov/rlc/pacificcoast/blog.htm>).

Part of a series of articles titled [Fire at Point Reyes: Past, Present and Future](#) (<https://www.nps.gov/articles/series.htm?id=C5116C14-0629-E9BE-E6A0A1A19DCA57D3>).



On August 30, a firefighter strategically burns vegetation as a part of the effort to contain the Woodward Fire.

Next: [Why the West Burns](#)

(<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/why-the-west-burns.htm>)

TAGS

point reyes national seashore

sfan

pcslc

blog

fire

wildfire

woodward fire

vision fire

science

wildland fire

point reyes

Last updated: September 3, 2021

Was this page helpful?

☐ Yes

☐ No



An official form of the United States government. Provided by [Touchpoints](https://touchpoints.app.cloud.gov/) (<https://touchpoints.app.cloud.gov/>)