

Handout H12-1. Questioning the Effects of the Storrie Fire

Use the Storrie Fire Burned-Area Report to address ONE of the questions below in a 3-minute radio spot for a popular radio station in Plumas County, California – the location of the fire. You cannot include graphics, so be careful to explain any information from maps and graphs very clearly. Include appropriate sound effects. Do not use jargon or acronyms—use technical terms only when needed and define them. Record the radio spot; it will be “assigned listening” for your class.

The fire is still smoldering, but it is not currently threatening any structures. There has been a lot of smoke in the air. There are no evacuations currently in effect, but the public is not being allowed into the burned area yet. You have 2 objectives:

1. Help the general public understand how the Storrie Fire has changed the soils in the burned area.
2. Help them understand how those changes might affect their lives – in other words, why they should care?

Address ONE of these questions:

- A. What is the overall condition of the soil on the burned area? Focus especially on the statistics in Part III of the report (“WATERSHED CONDITION”) and the “Burn Intensity Descriptions.” Explain what proportion of the burned area has each kind of severity. Find a way to make the erosion potential and sediment potential real to your listeners. For example, you might give examples of just how much 97 tons is, or how many cubic yards of sediment would come off the fire if ALL of the high-severity burned area lost that much soil.
- B. What is the report’s recommendation regarding the Bucks Lake Wilderness? What is the rationale for this approach, based on the information the report gives on soil burn severity? The wilderness may be very precious to some of your audience and meaningless to others, so find a way to engage as many of your listeners as possible.
- C. What is the likelihood that flooding and erosion will damage local roads and human communities? How extensive is that threat – over the entire burned area, or ...? What can be done about it? How long will people have to worry about it?
- D. How could soil burn severity affect aquatic species and riparian areas? How extensive are the threats – over the entire burned area, or... ? What can be done about the situation? Why should your listeners care?