**International workshop on wildfire risk culture and communication**

# Fire use and wildfire risk in Europe; communication needs for societal involvement

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(Solsona, July 8th 2015)

Humanitarian Aid
and Civil Protection

# Some issue regarding wildfire risk and forests in Europe

- From fire as a "tool" to wildfire as a hazard…. in one generation!

- Changing context of risk…
  Traditional knowledge in crisis
  Wildfires appear in non usual areas (including central and northern Europe)

**International workshop on wildfire risk culture and communication. Solsona, July 8-10th 2015**
Fire use and wildfire risk in Europe; communication needs for societal involvement. E. Plana Bach CTFC

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## Some issue regarding wildfire risk and forests in Europe

- People "loves" forest, even they don't know how it works ... all have to be protected

- Fire service (the more visible) is acting only in the end of the causal chain .. From forest fires as a rural development issue moving to a urban and spatial planning issue .. New actors involved

- Wildfires are burning forest but overall houses and urban areas (from natural hazard to global emergency and civil protection priority)

- Fires nº and surface statistic data does not help to explain the situation


INSTITUCIONS I MARC LEGAL EN RELACIÓ AL NÚMERO D'INCENDIS I A LA SUPERFÍCIE FORESTAL AFECTADA A CATALUNYA, PERÍODE 1986-2013

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## Some issue regarding wildfire risk and forests in Europe

- Fire as the "enemy", technological "myth" and ignition causality emphasis make difficult to explain the fire as a perturbation (resilient landscapes?)

- Wildfire as a natural hazard? Or human made? ..."no ignition no fires"?

- Wildfire risk, a cross-sectoral issue affecting several policies (forest, rural, land planning, education, …) … risk mitigation strategies need times and strong coordination without clear cost benefit cash flow … societal support is needed

- Are the responsibilities regarding risk prevention clear enough? What to communicate?



10 February 2014, 5:54am GMT
**Total flood defence is a myth: we must learn to live with the water**

Sometimes the choice is to flood town or country. Sometimes it's both. Ben Rennells.
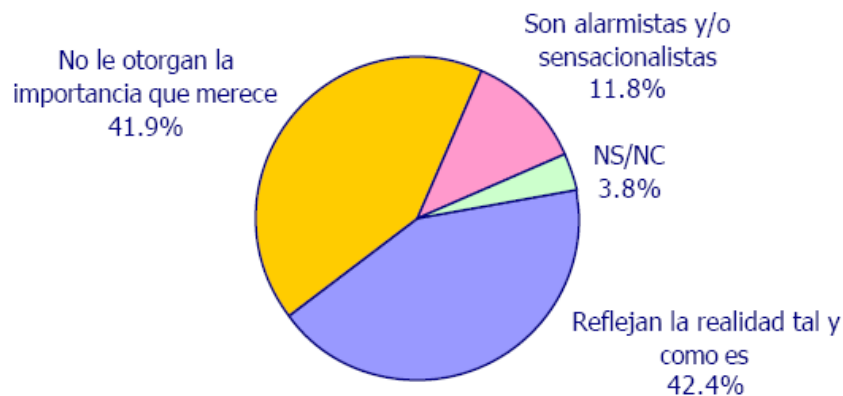©PA



National Forest
**WILDERNESS**



Making A Home Firewise and Waterwise
**Reducing your risk of wildfire**



FOR 71
**Landscaping
in Florida
with Fire
in Mind**

Martha Monroe and Alan Long
School of Forest Resources and Conservation

UF UNIVERSITY of
FLORIDA
IFAS Extension

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# Needs of communication for societal involvement



Cuando los medios de comunicación informan sobre los incendios forestales...

- Son alarmistas y/o sensacionalistas 11.8%
- No le otorgan la importancia que merece 41.9%
- NS/NC 3.8%
- Reflejan la realidad tal y como es 42.4%

n = 761 individuos



Cuando los medios de comunicación informan sobre los incendios forestales

- NS/NC; 7%
- Reflejan la realidad tal como es; 5%
- No le otorgan la importancia que merecen; 14%
- Son alarmistas y/o sensacionalistas ; 77%
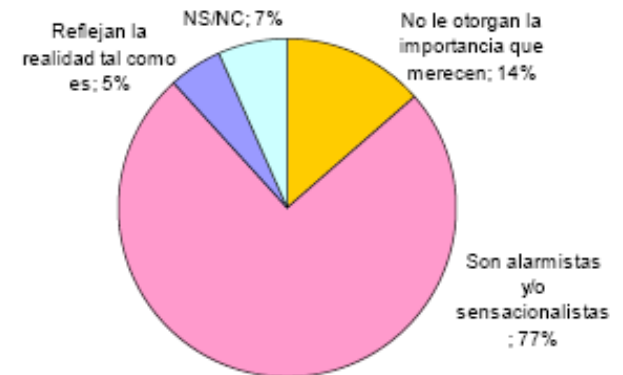
Survey within and forest fires expert group (33 p)

APAS, 2003. Estudio sociológico sobre la percepción de la población española hacia los incendios forestales

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# Needs of communication for societal involvement

- What we want?        - Citizens experts on fire ecology…

    *.. for public support to long term cross-sectoral policies*

    - Enhance self-responsibility and self-protection?
        *… for more effective civil protection and emergency management*

- New actors involved, new boundaries of knowledge transference and communication

**FIREfficient "Operational tools for improving efficiency in wildfire risk reduction in EU landscapes"**

**eFIRECOM "Efficient fire risk communication for resilient societies"**

OTHERS?

SPATIAL&URBAN PLANNERS

FOREST MANAGERS

FIRE EXPERTS

6

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# Needs of communication for societal involvement

- **Factors affecting the individual capacity of action** (Martin et al 2007)**:**

    **The perceived effectiveness of actions to reduce the risk**

    **Confidence in the ability to correctly carry out actions**

    **The perceived responsibility for fire risk management**

    **Trust and credibility to the institution promoting actions**

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Martin, W.E., Raish, C., Kent, B. Eds. 2007 Wildfire risk: human perceptions and management implications. Washington, DC. Resource for the future

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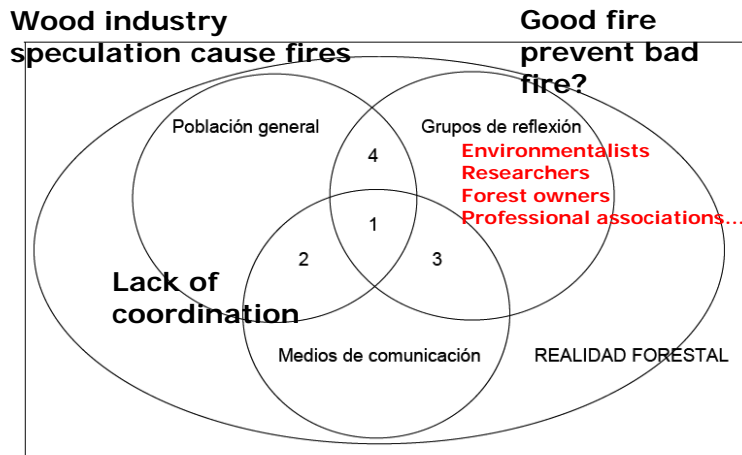# Needs of communication for societal involvement

•   Be coherent, be credible …



Ilustración 1. Casuística del modelo de construcción social de las percepciones..



… and try to explain the whole history

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## Needs of communication for societal involvement

- Any wildfire event is offering a media window… be proactive (and imaginative, media is seeking for something new to explain.. And there is a nice history to be explained)

- Strategic communication is needed; target audience focus oriented (towards citizens versus towards municipalities to involve citizens)

- Use the planning process and governance tools to involve actors and communicate

- Create communication alliances (e.i with environmental NGOs);
  To increase the penetration of the message
  To increase the scope and credibility of the message

 El fuego es un **elemento natural** que forma parte de los fenómenos que modelan el paisaje. Especialmente en los ambientes mediterráneos debemos admitir que el fuego es un incómodo compañero de viaje con el que hay que convivir.  Precisamente, gran parte de nuestra vegetación está adaptada a la acción del fuego, con estrategias rebrotadoras o de germinación tras el incendio.

Sin embargo, el fenómeno de los incendios forestales ha dejado de ser una perturbación natural que modela el paisaje para convertirse en una **terrible amenaza** que en más de un 95% de los casos está ocasionada por el ser humano. Se saben las causas, pero el número de responsables detenidos es pequeño y  menor todavía el

El futuro en llamas
Cambio climático y evolución de los incendios forestales en España

GREENPEACE

9

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# How to reach societal involvement in the fire risk mitigation?

✓ **A better social understanding of the phenomena is needed in a global emergency context where fire affects forest, infrastructures and people all together**

• Fire risk is not only an issue of ignitions but a propagation capacity of landscape

• Understanding of the fragility and vulnerability of environ to make people aware on the exposition of risk, the need of prevention and self-protection (WUI inhabitants) and the responsibility in fire ignitions control

• Telling the role of fire as a natural disturbance make easier to understand the need of getting less vulnerable landscapes as alternative to invest only in suppression system which has a limit

• Involving land planners in reducing settlements and infrastructures vulnerability to fire risk

✓ **Globally, social and political concern on fire impacts should be used to emphasizes the role of forest management and rural development policies on wildfire risk mitigation, from a social, economic and ecological perspective**

✓ **Communication is more and more a crucial element in wildfire risk management strategies**

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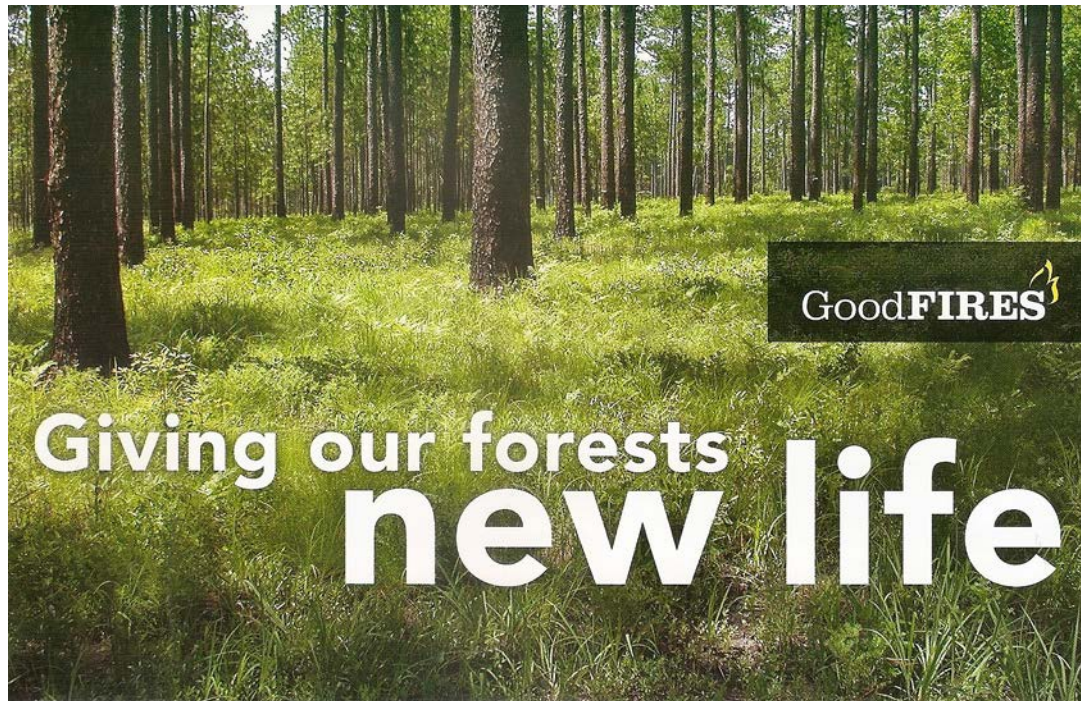
# Thanks for your attention

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