

## **For Immediate Release (April 3, 2023)**

Contact: William Baker, Ph.D., [bakerwl@uwo.edu](mailto:bakerwl@uwo.edu), 970-403-3862  
Chad Hanson, Ph.D., [chanson1@gmail.com](mailto:chanson1@gmail.com), 530-273-9290  
Dominick DellaSala, Ph.D., [dominick@wild-heritage.org](mailto:dominick@wild-heritage.org), 541-621-7223  
Mark Williams, Ph.D., [markalanwilliams@hotmail.com](mailto:markalanwilliams@hotmail.com)

### **Landmark Study Finds Pattern of "Falsification of the Scientific Record" in Government-Funded Wildfire Studies**

An unprecedented [study](#) was published today in the peer-reviewed journal *Fire*, exposing a broad pattern of scientific misrepresentations and omissions that have caused a "falsification of the scientific record" in recent forest and wildfire studies funded or authored by the U.S. Forest Service with regard to dry forests of the western U.S. Forest Service related articles have presented a falsified narrative that historical forests had low tree densities and were dominated by low-severity fires, using this narrative to advocate for its current forest management and wildfire policies.

However, the new study comprehensively documents that a vast body of scientific evidence in peer-reviewed studies that have directly refuted and discredited this narrative were either misrepresented or omitted by agency publications. The corrected scientific record, based on all of the evidence, shows that historical forests were highly variable in tree density, and included "open" forests as well as many dense forests. Further, historical wildfire severity was mixed and naturally included a substantial component of high-severity fire, which creates essential snag forest habitat for diverse native wildlife species, rivaling old-growth forests.

These findings have profound implications for climate mitigation and community safety, as current forest policies that are driven by the distorted narrative result in forest management policies that reduce forest carbon and increase carbon emissions, while diverting scarce federal resources from proven community wildfire safety measures like home hardening, defensible space pruning, and evacuation assistance.

"Forest policy must be informed by sound science but, unfortunately, the public has been receiving a biased and inaccurate presentation of the facts about forest density and wildfires from government agencies," said Dr. William Baker.

"The forest management policies being driven by this falsified scientific narrative are often making wildfires spread faster and more intensely toward communities, rather than helping communities become fire-safe," said Dr. Chad Hanson, research ecologist with the John Muir Project. "We need thinning of small trees adjacent to homes, not backcountry management."

"The falsified narrative from government studies is leading to inappropriate forest policies that promote removal of mature, fire-resistant trees in older forests, which causes increased carbon emissions and in the long-run contributes to more fires" said, Dr. Dominick A. DellaSala, Chief Scientist, Wild Heritage, a Project of Earth Island Institute.