

NO LONGER ON THE FRINGE: THE WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE AS HISTORY

by Stephen J. Pyne

When the American Society for Environmental History decided to hold its annual meeting in Boise in March 2008, it seemed a fitting occasion to bring together two groups—the wildland fire community and that community of historians interested in environmental matters. Here, it seemed, was an ideal opportunity to bring history’s firepower to bear on fire’s own history in a workshop organized by ASEH. Boise is home to the National Interagency Fire Center—the nation’s support center for wildland firefighting—and attendees toured the center as part of the workshop.

The intent was to gather different voices than those usually heard within the agencies’ choir. We sought historians of the American West, of urban fire, and of the global fire scene as well as journalists who had interested themselves in fire and its history. We wanted fire scientists to speak not only to the definition

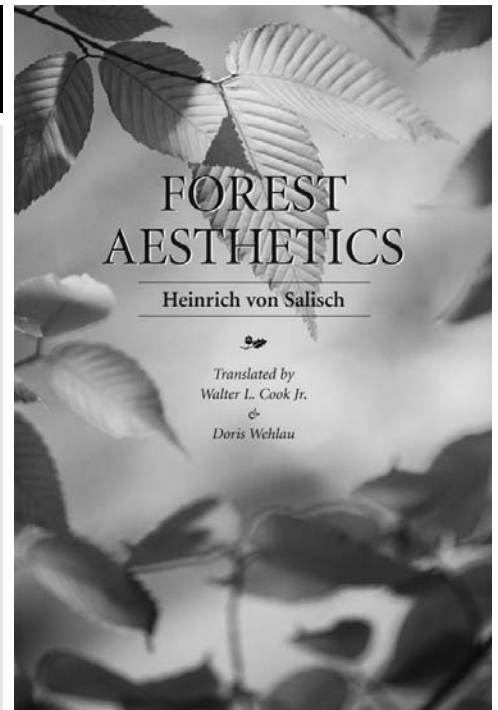
of the problem but also to its intellectual and institutional history. We wanted them to speak in their voices, realizing that a personal essay might throw more sparks than academic and technical prose. Thanks to the Forest History Society and funding from ASEH, we are publishing those essays in this special issue of *Forest History Today*.

Several sponsors agreed to help us. The Joint Fire Science Program includes the Wildland-Urban Interface within its mandate and generously stretched its mission to embrace history and provide funding. There are limits to what it can contribute for meetings, however, which was less than what the session required. Thanks to Jack Cohen, the Missoula Fire Lab of the U.S. Forest Service made up the difference. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service videotaped the presentations and broadcast them on the ASEH website. We thank them all. I wish to acknowledge also the indispensable role of Lisa Mighetto, executive director of the ASEH, who held this sometimes fractious collection of interests together before and after the workshop, and helped coordinate between the contributors and Jamie Lewis of *Forest History Today*. □

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