I normally don't curate an issue with any theme in mind. But sometimes, one emerges after the issue is assembled. In this case, wildfire and fire control are the subjects of several articles. Douglas MacCleery starts us off with an examination of the relationship Indigenous peoples in the U.S. Southeast had with fire at the time of European colonial settlement. Jameson Karns and Michelle Steen-Adams bring us Harold Weaver, a fire ecologist who worked in what is today the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs. Weaver and his collaborators studied the effects of the traditional practice of forest burning and advocated for its use in the Pacific Northwest. Weaver, however, didn't limit himself geographically to that region. As you'll see, he moved around the western U.S., and he made an impact at conferences convened in the U.S. South. It was while working there that Raymond Conarro, a U.S. Forest Service forester with no formal training in fire ecology, coined the term "prescribed burning," writes frequent contributor Char Miller. Conarro, a contemporary of Weaver's, started his career in his home state of Pennsylvania before being sent to create national forests in Mississippi in the 1930s, and then was appointed chief of fire control for the agency's Southern Region, the same region MacCleery starts us off with five centuries earlier.

And sometimes articles come in that, without intention, are in conversation with each other. So it is with Curt Meine's piece about Aldo Leopold and the evolution of the conservationist's thinking on land, ethics, and justice. This article is significantly longer than the other features. What Curt has to say is of great import, and this article, reprinted from a new journal not yet widely available, warrants an exception to our standards. Complementing that article is Julie Dunlap's look at Leopold's time at the Yale Forest School summer camp, where what he learned laid the foundation for his work with the Forest Service and later as a professor of game management and a land ethicist.

One practice of Harold Weaver's that made him a trailblazer was returning to the same plots of land over and over again across several decades and using a camera to document the changes in the landscape. Starting in 1969 and for the next fifty years, Gary Hartshorn led a team that eventually included his coauthors Diana Lieberman and Milton Lieberman in doing something similar—conducting a permanent plots study in Costa Rica that Gary helped initiate. The diversity of tree species in this old-growth forest is now under threat from climate change. Their research may inform a plan to rescue the most vulnerable tropical tree species and the biodiversity of those forests.

Also documenting changes in the land were the landscape painter Susie Barstow and mining engineer–turned–forest conservationist John Birkenbine. Nancy Siegel tells us about Barstow, who depicted idyllic forest scenes from New England to Asia to Europe, and was well known and well respected in her lifetime. Tom Straka, who has contributed articles over the years about charcoal iron furnaces found in Pennsylvania and Utah, introduces us to Birkenbine, whose work in the charcoal iron industry took him around the entire country and gave him a window into what was happening on the ground. What he found was that the industry was being wrongly blamed for

deforestation when in fact, industry leaders, led by Birkenbine, were not only calling for sustainable forest management in the United States but had been practicing it for a generation before the federal government began doing so. What Barstow and Birkenbine have in common is that not long after their deaths, historians forgot them and their important contributions to their respective fields. Similarly, Susan Jewell rescues U.S. congressman John Lacey's legislative legacy from obscurity in the Portrait column.

In October 2024, destructive hurricanes roared across the southern Appalachian Mountains and smashed towns in the Carolinas and Tennessee. Asheville, North Carolina, suffered extensive damage. Given that Asheville is the birthplace of forestry in America—it is where the first professional forestry school opened its doors, among other "firsts"—we're reprinting Bill Alexander's 2011 Places column about the region to remind readers of that city's role, and to encourage you to help the people there and in all the areas devastated by this year's hurricane and wildfire seasons.