

Yellowstone in the Afterglow

Lessons from the Fires

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Other photos: Most of the photos in this book are from the Yellowstone National Park collection and were taken by park staff. Many are the work of Jim Peaco. Other photos taken by park employees include: Ann Deutch (page 56); Roy Renkin (pages 59, 60, and 62); and Eleanor Clark (pages 35 and 39).

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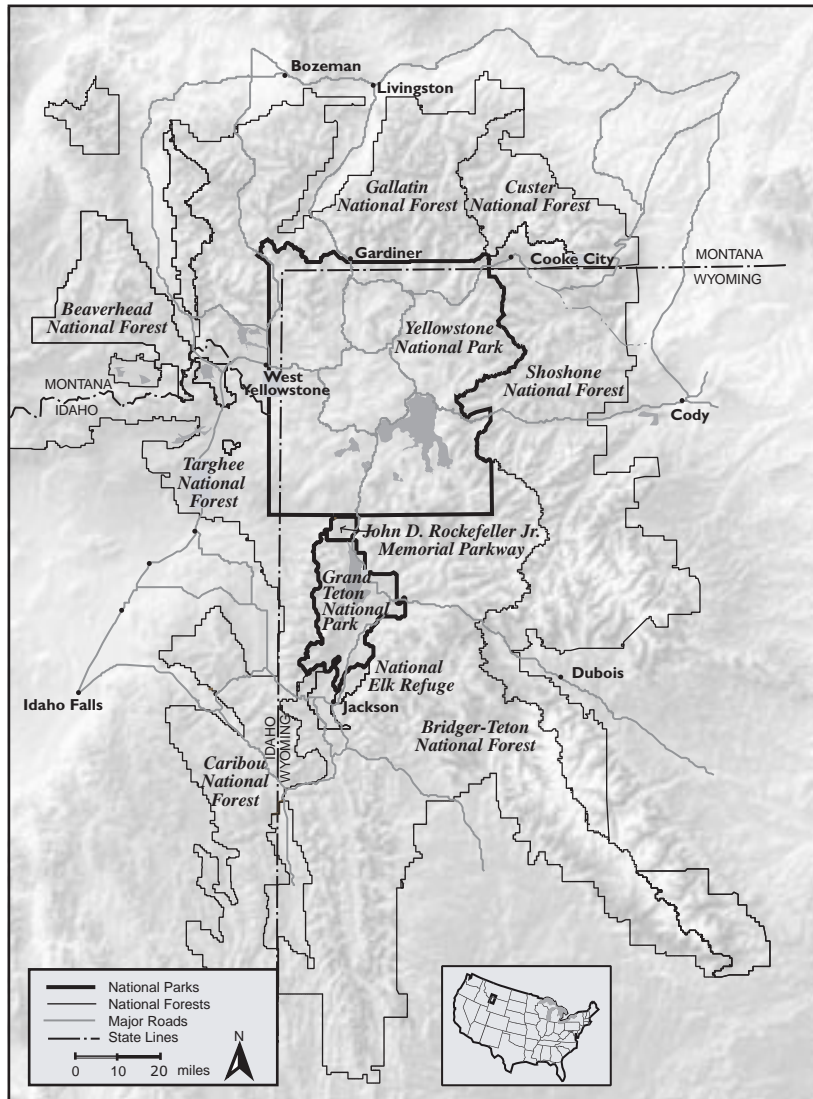


Only one stick is needed to start a fire when lightning strikes in Yellowstone, but it has to be a stick in a site ready to burn, and with a great many other sticks available to keep the blaze from going out. So too, with this book, which has been fueled by the many people who have contributed their time and research on a topic that was ready for an initial summing up.

In this effort to compile the findings of dozens of scientists in a broad range of disciplines, I have sought to do justice to the precision of their work. Any knowledge that may be gleaned from these pages owes much to their labors; any errors made in describing their research are my own. Technical reviews of an initial draft were generously provided by Don Despain and Doug Houston, both with the U.S. Geological Survey, Biological Resources Division, and by Bill Romme of Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado.

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I must also acknowledge the wonder and endurance of Yellowstone National Park itself. Only in a country that is rich in both wildlands and in its vision of what it wants to preserve for the future could there be a national park like Yellowstone in which fires like those of 1988 could have taken place.



The Greater Yellowstone Area

Greater Yellowstone is a loosely defined area of about 18 million acres that crosses the borders of Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. About 70% is managed by federal agencies: 7 national forests, 3 wildlife refuges, 2 national parks, and a national parkway. It also includes Indian reservations, state land, towns and rural areas in which more than 300,000 people live. Yellowstone National Park, at the center of greater Yellowstone, covers 2.2 million acres.