



School of Natural Resources
and the Environment

Seminar Series: Spring 2022

A TYRANNY OF TREES: THE REMAKING OF THE CALIFORNIA LANDSCAPE

SPEAKER: Lynn Huntsinger, Ph.D.

Environmental Science, Policy, and Management Department
University of California, Berkeley

DATE: Wednesday, April 13

TIME: 3:00-4:00 pm

LOCATION: [Zoom](#)

ABSTRACT:

Currently, wildfire size, frequency, and intensity are without precedent, at great cost to human health, property, and lives. I review the contemporary California firescape, the indigenous landscape that shaped pre-contact vegetation, the post-contact landscape that led us to our current situation, and the re-imagined grazing-scape that offers potential relief. Vegetation has been profoundly altered by the loss of Indigenous management, introduction of non-native species, implantation of inappropriate, militarized, forest management from western Europe, and climate change, creating novel ecosystems almost always more susceptible to wildfire than before. Vegetation flourishes during the mild wet winters of a Mediterranean climate and dries to a crisp in hot, completely dry, summers. Leaving nature “to itself” absent recognizing that California’s ecosystems have been irrecoverably altered has become a disaster of enormous proportions. Agriculture and active management in general are much neglected as an approach to developing fire-resistant landscape configurations, yet such interventions are essential. At present, livestock grazing is California’s most widespread vegetation management activity, and if purposefully applied to fuel management has great potential to do more.

