

I'm Carol Miller and I'm a research ecologist at the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute.

I've been at the institute since 2001.

It took me a while to get into the field of ecology.

The foundation for that had been laid by my parents.

They used to take our family out for a long camping trips that would last entire summers.

And I traveled most of the United States visiting national parks and national forests.

I was really struck a National Geographic issue that came into my mailbox and I read that cover

to cover and the issue was about a lot of the problems affecting the planet and the sustainability of our resources.

It just kind of struck me and I realized that I wanted to be a part of the solution.

I ended up going back to graduate school and got a degree in forest science and then ecology.

The fire research that I do at the institute I hope is helpful to wilderness managers in helping them understand the natural process of fire.

Fire is this really interesting process that creates pattern, because it burns through stuff.

It doesn't burn through uniformly.

It leaves all kinds of pattern on the landscape.

But it also responds to that pattern that's already on the landscape when the fire occurs so it's this really neat feedback between pattern and process.

We, humans, have a hard time with allowing fire to burn because it poses a threat to the values

that we might have outside of wilderness and so we do a lot of suppression in wilderness.

But wilderness is supposed to be managed to be something that we don't tamper with, something where we don't interfere with.

And where we let natural processes like fire, operate.

My favorite part about my job are the people that I end up working with.

Everybody seems to have this special little passion for wilderness.

It's just really rewarding to work with people who have that kind of passion and interest for,

you know, keeping and holding that resource, that really special resource of wilderness so that we will always have it.