

I'm Dr. Karin Riley.

I'm a Research Ecologist with the Human Dimensions program
at the Rocky Mountain Research Station in Missoula, Montana.

What got me interested in being a scientist was when I was a freshman in college
and I had the opportunity to take a class from a paleontologist by the name
of Stephen Jay Gould, who was quite well known.

He was really a showman and gave incredible lectures on topics ranging
from disturbance ecology to deep time to evolution.

And I really got hooked on this notion of deep time among other things.

So, when I say deep time, I mean the notion that our earth is
over four and a half billion years old.

And that's something that's hard for us to understand as humans -- that amount of time.
Over that period of time, there have been collisions of continents pushing up mountains.
There have been massive wildfires.

The earth has been hit by comets.

And over the short term, this can have a negative effect
on the plants and animals on the earth.

But over the longer term, our environment is adapted to it, and in fact in a lot of cases,
needs these disturbances in order to be healthy.

I've been studying wildfires for the last 16 years.

That's the thing that interests me the most.

I'm interested in how wildfires interact with our environment.

I'm interested in how they respond to conditions like droughts and climate change.

Women are still underrepresented in science, although we've come a long way.

I think it's really important for women and girls to see women succeeding in the
profession

of science, and also for men to see that --

for men to see women being vocal and smart and succeeding in science.

