



JULY 21, NOON EDT

ASPEN ECOLOGY & CONSERVATION: THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF A KEYSTONE SYSTEM

webinar presented by Dr. Paul C. Rogers



Abstract: To know western forests is to understand the outsized role played by quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides* Michx.) communities. As ecologists, we understand the natural bounty of aspen systems, but it is important to fully appreciate the value of these forests to society at-large. This presentation will look at values to people and ecosystems in the context of an evolving science and conservation of aspen. We will review basic ecology, research developments, and adaptive monitoring in contemporary forest stewardship. There are many threats to sustainable aspen forests, including past management, herbivory of wild and domestic ungulates, recreation and development, a changing climate, and lack of coordination at ownership/boundary lines. A key tenant across natural resource fields today is multi-species management; in other words, putting “systems thinking” to work. The Western Aspen Alliance (WAA) advocates monitoring and collaboration as central practices for effective management in aspen communities. Cross –agency, -boundary, and –discipline work will govern the future of sustainable aspen ecosystems. At the global scale, we will briefly discuss how aspen practices discussed here are being shared around the world under the “mega-conservation” banner. In sum, the WAA encourages conservation practitioners to take advantage of this service through participation, sound practice, and feedback.

Website: <https://western-aspen-alliance.org/>

This webinar presentation lays the groundwork for an in-depth symposium at the upcoming 2020 Natural Areas Conference that will address wildfire, herbivory, climate warming, development pressures, cross-boundary management, and regional monitoring of aspen in the Western United States.



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Paul holds a B.S. and M.S. in geography from Utah State University and University of Wisconsin – Madison, respectively. His doctorate is from Utah State University in Ecology. Paul’s prime area of study has been human impacts on vegetation in the western United States. He worked for the U.S. Forest Service for 16 years conducting monitoring activities and publishing results from the Interior West of the U.S., in Eastern Europe, and East Africa. Dr. Rogers was a Visiting Fellow at the University of Queensland, Australia (2014) and was recently awarded a Fulbright Specialist scholarship to Mendel University, Czech Republic (2017). Paul’s research on forest lichens has taken him around the region, as well as to Europe and Australia. He is currently working on issues related to disturbance ecology and wildlife impacts/benefits to aspen ecosystems. He has published more than 50 professional and technical papers and appeared in media print, video, and online content more than 100 times. He is an Adjunct Associate Professor in the Department of Environment and Society, a USU Ecology Center Associate, and the Director of the Western Aspen Alliance. Paul has taught Environmental Problem-Solving, Natural Resource Monitoring, and Planet Earth for honors students.