



# What governance opportunities are there for recurring wildfire challenges?



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## CONTEXT

Global environmental and social change is pushing wildfire activity and impact beyond known trajectories. Judith Kirschner and colleagues reviewed high-level wildfire reports to identify five themes recurring in the global wildfire challenge. They also argue these form opportunities for governance systems. Finally, they apply the initial framing to examine the case of Cyprus, a relatively small, wildfire-prone country and island in the southeast Mediterranean.

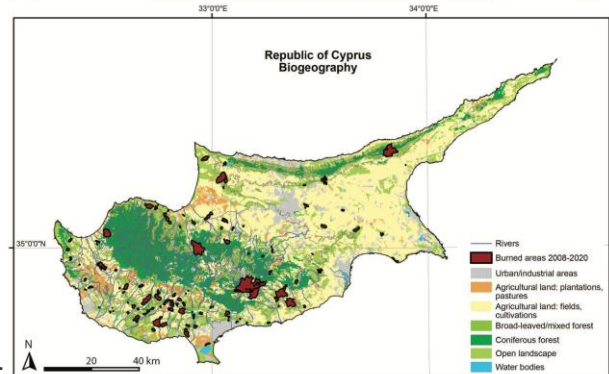


Image: Land features and wildfire perimeters in Cyprus.

## OUTCOMES

Globally		Cyprus
Wildfire challenge	Governance opportunity	Possible ways forward
<b>Wildfire paradox:</b> suppression leads to more destructive fires.	Social and ecological benefits of intentional burning. E.g. opportunity for training on fire behaviour.	Stimulate conversations on involved risks and benefits of suppression and intentional burning.
<b>Limits of suppression:</b> inability of emergency teams to respond to the needs everywhere.	Anticipate conditions of upcoming decades in management decisions.	Invest into land management practices (e.g. grazing, orchards) to maintain mosaic landscapes.
<b>Local characteristics determine wildfire impact:</b> vital role of communities.	Empower local communities with information and skills for mental and physical readiness.	Engage residents, and municipal and district administrations in conversations <i>before</i> disaster strikes.
<b>Social components of risk and vulnerability:</b> defining impact in addition to biophysical factors.	Reconceptualise wildfire risk to better emphasise social contributors to the build-up of wildfire risk. E.g. different vulnerabilities, land ownership.	Identify and address social and systemic factors contributing to wildfire risk. Build on expertise in silviculture and civil protection to also include social, cultural and systemic factors contributing to wildfire risk.
<b>Wildfire complexities embedded in different systems:</b> wildfires do not stop at jurisdictional or administrative boundaries.	Collective action: leverage collaboration amongst wildfire actors in formal and informal networks.	Empower, coordinate and expand existing initiatives of NGOs, civil society, research disciplines and state agencies.

## IMPACT ON WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT

- Many wildfire challenges are common across a range of socio-ecological systems, forming opportunities to be addressed in governance systems.
- This research offers five themes that are entry points for wildfire governance action towards better-prepared communities and landscapes amidst ongoing social and environmental change.
- Wildfires are a highly complex process, and the proposed solutions contribute to existing collective efforts and the ongoing conversation about visions for wildfire preparedness, both globally and in Cyprus.

**FULL ARTICLE:** Kirschner, J., Steelman, T., Charalambidou, I., Gücel, S., Petrou, P., Papageorgiou, K., Karayiannis, A., Boustras, G. 2024. Uncharted territory: governance opportunities for wildfire and the case of Cyprus. *International Journal of Wildland Fire*. 33, WF23177.

Freely available at: <https://bit.ly/3RvvH53>

Collaborators



The PyroLife project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme MSCA-ITN-2019 – Innovative Training Networks under grant agreement No 860787