



Recent history of forest fires in Spain: 20 years later

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The EGIF Spanish forest fires database is a most complete one. In 1998, Moreno et al. published an analysis of the forest fires history in the country (Recent History of Forest Fires in Spain, in Large Forest Fires, edited by J.M. Moreno, Backhuys Publ., Leiden, NL, pags- 159-185) based on the historical records contained in the EGIF database for the period 1974-1994. Here we did a similar analysis, complemented with additional information, of a period comprising 20 additional years. The analysis reveals that some of the tendencies observed in the first period are maintained, while others have changed. Worth noting is the general decrease in the number of fires, as well as in the area burned per year. In accordance with this, negative trends are detected in most parts of the country for fire frequency and burned area. Notwithstanding, this pattern is compatible with the expansion of fires to new areas that were not present in earlier times. So, there are less fires and area burned but fires are more widespread. Also, while weather and climate conditions amenable for fires have been on the increase, no consistent trends are detected for changes in the size of fires. Finally, an analysis of what is burned by fires show that non-forest areas are becoming prominent. Within the burned forest areas, notable changes in magnitude and type of species affected are also relevant, with Pinus species becoming less abundant and Quercus species becoming more affected. Overall, our analysis reveals that fires are changing in Spain, both geographically and temporally.