

Book explores world of wildland urban interface firefighting

By Tracy Ross, Outside

On July 9, 2016, two hitchhikers camping illegally on private land north of Nederland, Colorado, piled rocks onto a campfire that they hadn't fully extinguished. Shortly after, wind (most likely) flamed the embers into a blaze. By 1:30 p.m., tentative puffs of smoke gathered above the ad hoc site, flanked by groves of dry aspen and conifer. The fire soon made a 40-acre run up a hill and across a ridge heavily populated with homes.

A year and a half later, I know that wildland firefighters acted heroically to stop the blaze that would come to be known as the Cold Springs Fire. It eventually charred 430 acres of private land and 98 acres of Forest Service land, required 12 Type 1 and Type 2 fire crews, employed 744 fire-related personnel, and cost a total of \$3.5 million.

Journalist Heather Hansen had been following firefighters from Station 8 in Boulder, Colorado, for months when the Cold Springs Fire broke out in Nederland. (She even became a certified wildland firefighter in the process.) In her new book, "Wildfire: On the Front Lines with Station 8" (\$25; Mountaineers Books), an entire section is devoted to a fire that personally affected my life—which, truthfully, may have influenced my positive feelings about the book. But what Hansen really focuses on is telling the story of fire management and mitigation in the West, layered with the added context of history, science, landscape, and human behavior.

Read the whole story