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**(Neb.)-Forester Says Logging Could Have Eased Pine Ridge Fires**

By: Dennis and Kathi Brown Posted at: 10/07/2012 07:42 AM

By GRANT SCHULTE

Associated Press

LINCOLN, Nebraska - A forester says fires that swept through northwest Nebraska this summer would have caused less damage and threatened less property if the region's trees had been more aggressively managed.

Nebraska District Forester Doak Nickerson says the forest was overgrown in many places, giving the flames more fuel and triggering dangerous canopy-level fires that might have been avoided.

Nickerson says the massive and unusually intense fires illustrate the need for better maintenance of forestland. The Nebraska Forest Service has a fund to help cover the cost of logging, but Nickerson says more money is needed to meet the demand.

Jane Darnell, forest supervisor for the Nebraska National Forest and Grassland, says federal and state officials have joined forces to prepare the forests for fires, but plenty of work remains.